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WEEKLY

Thursday January 21, 2016

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Sky's friendly
Tour rivalry



Jens Voigt's training secrets

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a 17-year pro career



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laid bare

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disc brakes
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peloton?

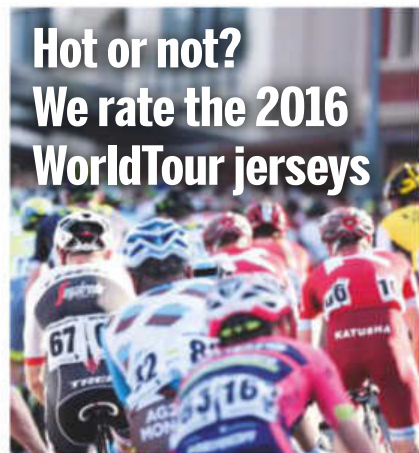


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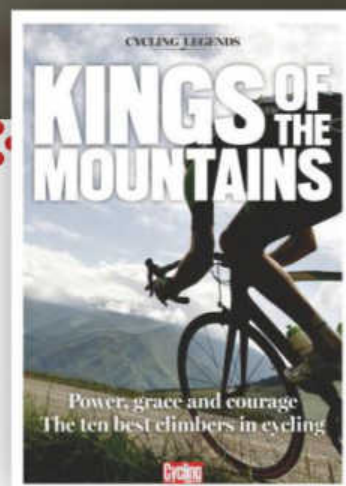
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Weathering the winter

To ride, or not to ride, that was the question facing most of us this weekend when the temperature dipped as low as it did. Those of you living and riding in the north have had to put up with all sorts of weather conditions this winter, but this weekend was the first big freeze to affect the whole country.

When I was younger (and fitter) I would have gone out. No question. Back in the days when I was serious about my training and racing I devised a three-hour route that was entirely ridden on A-roads.

It was incredibly dull, and far from an enjoyable bike ride. Why did I do it? Well, because I had to, I don't think I even questioned it. I had races penned in and I couldn't miss a whole weekend of riding.

Now my choice is: roller session or stay in bed?

On Saturday I chose the roller session. And I'm glad I did. It was my first one this winter and I knew it was going to hurt, but it left me feeling great. That post-exercise feeling is hard to beat, and the sense of accomplishment is even greater when the weather is so bad.

The real advantage of an indoor session is that it doesn't leave you feeling drained for the rest of the day — often the case after three hours out in the cold and wet.

Now, with several weeks of winter still to get through, the challenge is to keep those sessions going.



Simon Richardson
Editor

Photos: Chris Auld, Andy Jones



Wonderful world of
keirin racing, p28

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Sky encourage Froome-Thomas rivalry

British stars set for Tour de France showdown

Richard Abraham in Majorca

Team Sky boss Sir Dave Brailsford would be prepared to see one of his star British riders leave as the team embraces the potential for a leadership rivalry between Geraint Thomas and Chris Froome at the 2016 Tour de France.

However, with Thomas aiming to become Sky's second protected rider at this year's Tour following a breakthrough performance in 2015, defending champion Froome and Brailsford have dismissed the suggestion that the rapport between the two riders might sour and lead to a repeat of the breakdown in relations between Bradley Wiggins and Froome (pictured, right) during and after the 2012 Tour.

Speaking at the team's winter training camp in Majorca, a confident Brailsford welcomed the potential for the duo to clash as a way of encouraging healthy rivalry. When asked whether he anticipated any problems managing the two riders he replied: "I hope so."

"He [Geraint] is a man on a mission, and he's nipping at his [Froome's] heels," Brailsford said.

"I hope that Geraint does get to a point where he's challenging Chris. It would be great for Geraint, great for Chris, and ultimately either they can get what they want here or if they can't, they'll go somewhere else."

The Wiggins years

Wiggins became the first British rider to win the Tour in 2012 but Froome, who finished strongly and placed second overall,

felt constrained by team tactics. The following season saw the pair's relationship deteriorate further, with Froome alleging that Wiggins had failed to pay him his share of the race winnings.

Reflecting on that turbulent period, Brailsford added: "[As a rider] you get to the point where you think, 'hold on, I can win, why am I going to sacrifice my chance, make you a multi-millionaire, and then in Paris you go on that podium and I sit around the back of the Champs-Elysées on the bus with a beer?'"

"I'm very open about it to the guys; here's the deal, put it on the table and be frank about it," he said. "If you can't satisfy everybody's need, like winning the Tour, then ultimately one will go and win it elsewhere. So we'll see."

Froome appears to enjoy a healthier relationship with Thomas than he did with Wiggins, with he and the Welshman regularly training together in and around their adopted home of Monaco. With Thomas training in Australia ahead of this week's Tour Down Under, Froome insisted that there would be no repeat of the falling out between him and Wiggins, adding that a podium featuring him and Thomas "would be the dream".

"I find it very hard to see things with G going that way," Froome said. "We are both pretty open and honest with each other."

"In every team you've got little arguments with the guys around you and that's great, that's only healthy that you have those arguments and you talk about what you think you can be doing better, or that you're not doing."

A new Froome

Defending Tour de France champion, proud new father, holder of a new contract worth an estimated £4m a year until 2018, and for the time being at least, leader of one of the strongest Sky squads ever assembled: Chris Froome has said he feels on top of the world as he prepares to embark on his 2016 campaign.

"If I compare where I am now to where I was in 2014 when I'd won the Tour de France in 2013, I feel a lot more confident in myself," Froome said. "I feel a lot more at ease in the position that I'm in now, I don't feel as if the whole world is on my shoulders, as I did then."

Froome, whose son Kellan was born in December, explained he had a renewed motivation brought about by fatherhood, and not only because his training camp room-mate Wout Poels doesn't wake up crying in the middle of the night.

"Of course I'd much rather be at home with my son seeing him grow up and all the rest of it, but if I'm not going to be there then it's got to be for a good reason," Froome explained.

Froome has been working specifically on his time trial position this winter by riding his time trial bike on long road rides and conducting aerodynamic track testing to optimise his bio-mechanics. The 2016 Tour route contains two time trials, with a hilly time trial course in Rio de Janeiro also offering him the opportunity to win Olympic gold.

The Rio road race also looks suited to Froome; the brutally difficult course of 260km features a final climb that he described as 'savage'.

Froome is set to start his season gently, racing only twice before April at the Herald Sun Tour (February 3-7) and the Tour of Catalunya (March 21-27) with the aim of staying fresh for the Tour and Olympics and a potential tilt at the Vuelta a España.

Photo: Pete Godding

MY VIEW...

Richard Abraham

Cycling Weekly news writer

Dave Brailsford has very publicly laid down the gauntlet to his riders with some bullish rhetoric, but does he mean it? Would he really let either Froome or Thomas leave to pursue their GC ambitions elsewhere? Both riders are extremely valuable to Sky, and he will be working hard behind the scenes to make sure that both can co-exist as far as possible.



Ewan wins Tour Down Under prelude

Australian sprinter starts home race on a high

Sophie Smith in Adelaide

Promising Australian sprinter Caleb Ewan laid down an early marker by winning the Tour Down Under's prelude criterium in Adelaide on Sunday.

In the absence of previous winners André Greipel and Marcel Kittel, who opted not to head to Australia for the season opener, 21-year-old Ewan was presented as the sprinter to beat in the event.

True to form, the Orica-GreenEdge rider admirably managed that pressure to power past Giacomo Nizzolo (Trek-Segafredo) and Britain's Adam Blythe (Tinkoff) in the 51km circuit race.

"It's always hard going into a race as a favourite, especially when there is such a tough field here," Ewan, the Australian national crit champion, said.

Already a Tour of Spain stage winner, his Orica team are meticulously managing the Australian's development, and he does not look at risk of falling by the wayside as sprinters at the squad — namely Matt Goss and Leigh Howard — have previously done.

"We've still got to be pretty cautious with him because he is young but he's going to make some big steps this year in the WorldTour. That's the plan," said sports director Matt White.

Cautiously confident

Ewan spent almost half his neo-pro season last year racing in Australia and Asia to gain confidence through winning. This year he is set to fully introduce himself to the European peloton with stage success at the Giro d'Italia an objective.

"The focus for him is to keep winning but winning at a higher level," White said.

"His biggest asset at the moment is his speed. I think endurance and his condition will come. People try to compare him with Robbie McEwen but Robbie wasn't pro until he was 24. Caleb is 21, so he's going well."

The six-day Tour Down Under, the opening race of the UCI WorldTour, was scheduled to start on Tuesday, with Saturday's hill-top finish to Willunga Hill likely to be the decisive stage.

■ Full report on page 68.





Swift unsure of Sky future

Ben Swift is keeping an open mind this year as his ambitions and Team Sky's GC objectives move further apart.

The 28-year-old kicked off his 2016 season at the Tour Down Under this week with an eye on stage success and supporting overall contender Geraint Thomas. He placed fourth in Sunday's prelude criterium in Adelaide.

Swift — one of only five riders to have ridden for Sky since the team's debut 2010 campaign — says he is "happy at the minute" with the team, but that he has observed a change in its focus.

"In Sky we don't really have that [lead-out train] anymore. The first couple of years we were all about that, but, quite rightly so, the team has become so dominant in stage racing that that's very much second now," Swift said.

No more Sky train

Sky does foster sprinters in Swift, Giro d'Italia stage winner Elia Viviani and new signing Danny Van Poppel, but has become the stage race team of reference with three Tour de France victories among others in recent years. Where that leaves Swift beyond 2016 remains to be seen.

"I'm on my second year and there was an option with a third," he said of his existing contract. "I need to speak

with the team and see where we are at with that and what my options are."

Nonetheless, the team granted the versatile sprinter permission to stay at his South Africa winter base instead of travelling to the normally compulsory December team training camp in Majorca.

"I've been there [South Africa] for four years now so I know I can train pretty well there, instead of adding more travel days," he said. "It's perfect for what I need — six-seven kilometre climbs, it's windy, bit of flat, good bit of sun, which you don't get in Yorkshire or the Isle of Man in November."

Swift has identified the Tour de Yorkshire as an early-season objective after crashing out of the opening stage and injuring his shoulder last year.

"Generally, I just want to be consistent, have a good start and get some confidence back.

"Milan-San Remo will definitely be back on the cards again but the cobbled Classics not so much. For me, it's going back to the weeklong stage races that are lumpy," he added. "I enjoy the big bunch sprints but they're not really my forte. It's much better when there are 30-40 guys left."

MY VIEW...

Nick Bull

Cycling Weekly news writer

Ben Swift would attract plenty of offers should he decide to leave Team Sky at the end of the season. A 13-time pro race winner (the best arguably his Tour of the Basque Country stage in 2014), the Yorkshireman is clearly a talented rider — but has he been utilised properly by his current squad?



BC confirms disc brake ban for 2016

Domestic races hit by UCI rules

Joe Robinson

Disc brakes will not be permitted in any domestic road and closed circuit events in 2016, British Cycling has confirmed.

Although the UCI has extended last season's limited roll-out of the controversial equipment to cover all professional men's and women's teams and international races as part of an increased trial for 2016, this has not been extended through to national organisations' accredited events.

A BC spokesperson commented that, as the UCI are still monitoring their use throughout the season with a view to them becoming legal in 2017, "the existing rules remain in place, namely that disc brakes are prohibited in all domestic road and closed circuit racing".

As a result, the likes of One Pro Cycling, Raleigh-GAC and Team Wiggins will be permitted to use disc brakes in UCI races — such as the Tour of Britain — but not any BC-sanctioned events.

"British Cycling is not in a position to change [the regulations], as it is a direct rule from the UCI that all national federations must adhere to until further notice"

The extended trial in 2016 follows on from the two-month pilot last August and September, in which WorldTour teams were given the opportunity to use bikes with disc brakes at two events of their choice.

Their presence has proved controversial. "The riders are concerned about the safety aspects, about being cut or burnt by a disc," said Trek-Segafredo rider Fabian Cancellara, one of a number of riders to voice their concerns.

However, the BC spokesperson added that use of them in domestic events will likely be permitted in 2017, should the UCI ratify their use.



Photo: Andy Jones

Weekly column

Rob Hayles



"Pre-season team launches mean the horror of pale skin and off-season weight gain are there for all to see"

For the European road guys and girls it's pre-season training camp and team launch time. This, for some, can be quite painful. That's not just because there will always be those on a squad who have wintered well with regards to their fitness and will be dishing it out on the training rides. It's also because this is the period where the team photos and rider postcard shots that were taken in November or December will be released to the public. For a few, this means the horror of pale skin and the off-season weight gain are there for all to see.

I can remember back in December 2000, when we all turned up to a studio in Northern France near the Cofidis HQ for our photos. Dave Millar turned up with only the fronts of his legs shaved. Due to being tall lads, we were both on the back row for the team shot, anyway, and our individual postcards pictures were all taken above waist height. Still, the thought was there.

Team launches can be pretty dull affairs. They all boil down to the same thing: a group of riders who would rather be out on a warm-weather training ride are trooped out in front of the media. There will always be a bike or two on show, and these will be mounted on top of miraculously shiny team cars.

Talking of cars, there is often talk and speculation during the winter about which bikes teams will be riding the following year. This is, after all, why manufacturers go to great expense to supply them in the first place. But the team cars themselves often get a little overlooked.

Lately though there has been quite a bit of noise from a few with regards to the Ford cars being used in 2016 by Team Sky. It's got to the extent where it's as if this squad is now being judged not by its performances on the bike, but by the badge that adorns the team bosses' cars.

Now this is something I find quite strange. Then again, it's a topic that is often high on the list of conversation starters: "So, what are you driving these days?" Well, if this is how we are now to be judged, then I'm in trouble. As my wife Vicki once said about my current drive: "It's like a shire horse Rob: looks great in a field... but not so great on the motorway."

Former double world track champion, Rob Hayles is a pundit for TV and radio. He's also a coffee connoisseur and garden shed inventor

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GB sprinters keep Rio dreams alive at Track World Cup

Under-pressure squads return to form

Sophie Hurcom and Nick Bull

Great Britain's team sprinters kept their Olympic qualification hopes alive last weekend, as the men's and women's squads won gold and silver respectively at the three-day Track World Cup meeting in Hong Kong.

Having struggled for good results in international competition since London 2012, both squads went into the final round of this winter's series still seeking points needed to qualify for this summer's Rio Games.

And while neither squad have finalised their places, both delivered under pressure. The men's trio of Jason Kenny, Philip Hindes and Matthew Crampton were fastest in the qualification round, before Callum Skinner replaced Crampton for the final, in which they beat Poland and claimed the overall World Cup prize.

The silver won by Katy Marchant and Jess Varnish was the women's squad's first sprint medal at an international event in two years.

"It gives us a much stronger position. It's [qualification] not wrapped up, but these results have done us the world of good," Iain Dyer, Great Britain team head coach told *Cycling Weekly*.

"I think Olympic qualification comes from performing well, and the riders have gone into these World Cup rounds aiming to give their best," Dyer continued.

A maximum of five European nations can qualify for the nine team sprint places on offer for Rio, with the Track World Championships in London this March the final chance for squads to earn points.

The women's team began the weekend most at risk: they sat sixth in the European ranking, having been disqualified at the last World Cup round in New Zealand shortly before Christmas. However, the weekend's results will see them leapfrog France into fifth by six points, subject to confirmation. Although the men's squad sat fourth in the European ranking prior to the meeting, they have given themselves breathing space ahead of nearest challengers Poland and Russia.

"We're really still up against it for Olympic qualification," said Varnish, "so to come here and put places between us and the other European countries has really been a step in the right direction."

In the individual competition, Kenny appears to have found his form at the right time, as he also won a bronze medal. The 27-year-old has struggled for top-level performances since London 2012 — where he won gold in the event — but beat one of his biggest rivals, Francois Pervis of France, to third here.

The women's individual sprinters, however, experienced mixed fortunes. Marchant finished sixth, while Becky James placed 18th.





Jason Kenny (right) showed promising form in Hong Kong

Trott gets Hong Kong gold

Laura Trott won her second omnium gold of this winter's Track World Cup series in Hong Kong ahead of some of her biggest rivals. The 23-year-old from Cheshunt, who previously triumphed in the first World Cup round in Cali last November, won the elimination race en route to beating London 2012 silver medallist Sarah Hammer (USA) by 18 points. The only notable name missing from the start list was current world champion Annette Edmondson, who opted to race at the Santos Women's Tour stage race in her native Australia.

Cav looking strong for Olympic place

Mark Cavendish said he was "really pleased" to finish fourth in the omnium on his return to Track World Cup action. Cavendish, who is hoping to be selected for Britain's sole spot in the event at the Olympics, ended just outside the medal positions but secured the necessary qualification points needed to continue his selection bid. "I did better than I thought I was going to do," he told British Cycling. Head coach Iain Dyer said: "Cav looks good, to be fair. He's done a great job within the team, he's got a lot of genuine insight."

Emadi medals on endurance debut

Former sprinter Kian Emadi secured a bronze medal on his first outing as an endurance rider for Great Britain, as part of a young team pursuit squad. The 23-year-old, who was a last-minute replacement following Matt Gibson's withdrawal, has switched to British Cycling's endurance programme following a serious back injury in 2014. Alongside Ollie Wood, Germain Burton and Chris Latham, the quartet posted a time of 3.59.706 to beat Germany by more than a second in the third-place ride.

Track World Cup series revamp likely

Last weekend's Track World Cup round in Hong Kong was likely to be the final one in its current format, as the UCI looks to reform the competition next season. The governing body confirmed to *Cycling Weekly* that it is looking into changing the structure of the event and has been in discussions with national federations regarding making the event a "more sustainable and attractive offering". It is understood the plans include revising how the series' point scoring and qualification system for the World Championships and Olympic Games works.

World stage beckons for Richards

New category brings fresh opportunity

Chris Marshall Bell

Off the back of winning the inaugural National Under-23 Cyclo-Cross title, British teenager Evie Richards's fledgling career continued last week with a call-up to next month's World Championships.

The 18-year-old from Worcester, a member of British Cycling's Senior Academy mountain bike programme, is one of six GB riders selected for the first-ever under-23 women's race to be held at the World Championships (January 30), in Zolder, Belgium.

Richards took the British title for the category in Shrewsbury on January 10, beating nearest challenger Beth Crumpton by nearly two minutes, an impressive achievement for somebody who only started cycling just over three years ago.

"I was playing hockey at a high level and I had to pick up another sport to complement my fitness," she told *Cycling Weekly*. "My dad got a bike and he asked me to go out with him. I did it to improve my fitness, but I fell in love with it and dropped hockey."

Richards won on her National Trophy debut at Bradford in December 2014,

and returned there again before Christmas to claim one of her two victories in this winter's series.

But now under-23 female riders have been afforded their own category at the Worlds, Richards is intrigued to see how she'll fare against international rivals.

"It will be really interesting to see where I finish," she added. "There's so many competitive girls that you can't predict the winners."

Mountain biking is Richards's preferred discipline — she finished second in the junior women's cross-country Worlds last September — but says she is keen to explore the road and track.

British champions

Meanwhile, newly crowned elite national champions Liam Killeen and Nikki Harris wore their British jerseys for the first time last weekend. Killeen triumphed in the final round of this winter's National Trophy Series in Milton Keynes, while Harris placed 10th after a "race to forget" at the penultimate UCI World Cup round in Lignières, France. Helen Wyman placed seventh; all three are among the 18-rider GB squad for the World Championships. For the full line-up, visit: po.st/GBcxworlds2016.



Richards: ready for battle in Belgium



Injured Boonen delays race return

Etixx-Quick Step's Tom Boonen has delayed the start of his 2016 season in order to further recover from injuries sustained in last October's Abu Dhabi Tour. The four-time Tour of Flanders winner was scheduled to participate at this week's Tour de San Luis but will now start his season at the Tour of Valencia (February 3-7). Boonen's crash on day two of the Abu Dhabi Tour left the 35-year-old Belgian with permanent hearing damage in his left ear.



Boonen's still not fit to race

Düsseldorf TT start for 2017 Tour

Next year's Tour de France will begin with a 13km individual time trial in Düsseldorf, Germany, it was announced last week. The German city was awarded the race's Grand Départ in December after a London bid was withdrawn at the last minute. Stage two's route is yet to be finalised, but it will also start there.

Preston Park gets funding boost

British Cycling last week agreed to provide funding of £110,000 to make Brighton's Preston Park safe for racing again. Britain's oldest track was closed due to safety concerns in 2015, but BC's money will be added to £50,000 from external contributions to repair the facility's perimeter fencing. CW also understands that the Mountbatten track, in Portsmouth, is also set to permit racing again this year, two years since Richard Phillips-Schofield suffered fatal injuries after crashing during a race.



TVG's sticking with BMC

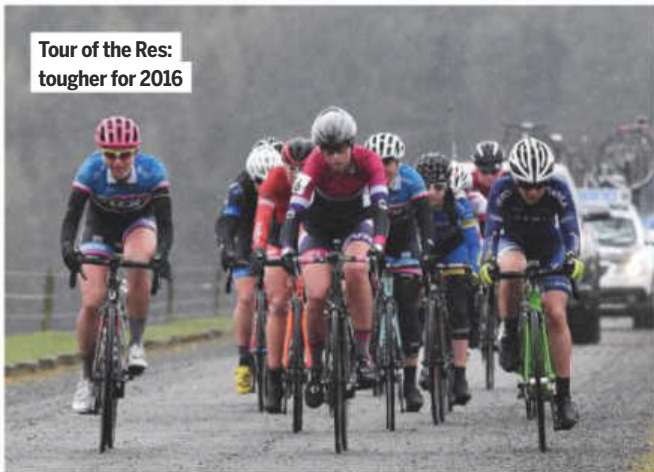
Van Garderen re-signs for BMC

Tejay van Garderen has committed his future to BMC, after signing an unknown-length contract extension beyond 2016. The 27-year-old American, who was on course for a podium finish in last year's Tour until he withdrew through illness on stage 17, had been linked with a move to Trek for 2017.

Tour of Britain in hunt for backers

The Tour of Britain is seeking a new title sponsor after insurance company Aviva opted against extending its current deal. The partnership, which started in 2014, will end after the Women's Tour in June.

Tour of the Res:
tougher for 2016



Women's Tour of the Reservoir steps up a gear

More miles added to third outing of National Road Series race

Nick Bull

In response to calls from riders, the Women's Tour of the Reservoir is getting tougher for 2016.

Forming the second round of British Cycling's Women's National Road Series, the North East-based event was first run in 2014 and expanded to two days last year.

Speaking to *Cycling Weekly*, organiser Mike Hodgson confirmed that the event's kermesse (April 16) will be increased from 46 to 55.2 kilometres (34.5 miles).

The following day's road race will include an extra lap of a 22.5-kilometre course around the Derwent Reservoir, which sits on the Northumberland and County

Durham border, taking the total distance to 112.5 kilometres (70 miles).

Hodgson's changes will likely appease BC president Bob Howden, who called on organisers to "give women events that are 60-mile plus, with some challenging courses," in the January 7 edition of *CW*.

"We put our foot in the water by making the race a two-day in 2015, and it was a success," said Hodgson. "We've got to encourage these riders, and I'm pleased to hear their feedback."

Dani King (Wiggle-High5) and Joanna Rowsell (Pearl Izumi-Sports Tours International) won the kermesse and road race respectively last April, with the former winning overall.

Guest column
David Millar



"I didn't allow my heart rate to go over 170bpm in January early in my career"

One of my overriding memories of my career is that if I wasn't going well in January then it didn't bode well for most of the season. There was no hiding anymore at that point: instead of comparing yourself to computers, numbers and feelings, you were actually comparing yourself against your peers, for better or worse. There were quite a few times that I wasn't up to shape.

January was a real indication of if you had done too much or not enough, or if you took too much time off over Christmas and New Year. I never used to allow my heart rate to go over 170bpm in January for the first few years of my career. The moment I went over 170 I got race-fit so quickly that I would end up stomping at the end of January with no races to do, peaking at the beginning of March and then suffering in Paris-Nice or Tirreno-Adriatico.

For this reason I really tried to hold myself back and would be the first guy dropped in the training camp, not because I was unfit but because I was not willing to race or test myself. I stood by that when I got older — I didn't race at training camp. There were guys who used to love racing at training camps and guys who would be content in waiting for the races.

Things are different now because everyone's got data analysis, but back then it was more on feel and heart rate. The coach of the team wouldn't have any idea who was going well and who wasn't, or who was over-pushing or carefully being very analytical and rational about their training.

It's a completely different sport now in that respect: people train incredibly hard almost through the whole year and in January you've got team coaches who are capable of telling a rider in the evening, after looking at their data, to go a little bit easier in training or to raise the level.

Before it would be: "Why aren't you going harder?" The reply would resemble something like, "Well, I'm taking control," before the coach came back with, "No, you're lying."

Guys would turn up skinny at the training camp and you would say, "Woah, look at you, you've had a great winter, you're flying." Actually they'd probably just been on the lash and had not been eating. Now, you'd be able to do a data analysis and see that they were skinny but had no power.

A winner of nine Grand Tour stages, David Millar is now a pundit for ITV's cycling coverage and recently launched his own cycling tours.



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Crit series returns to Preston circuit

Chris Marshall-Bell

Thursday night criteriums are set to return to Preston this year, with all proceeds going to the Lewis Balycky Trust Fund.

Last year was the first since 2000 that there was no criterium series at the University of Central Lancashire's cycle track, after the CDNW league became defunct at the end of 2014. Calls for racing to return to the 1.5km closed circuit have been answered by Jerrod Hartley, who expects the series to begin on March 31 and finish in late summer.

Monday (January 18) marked five years since 18-year-old Balycky, the former British Cycling Olympic Talent Team rider, died after being in collision with a van when on a training ride in Lancashire.

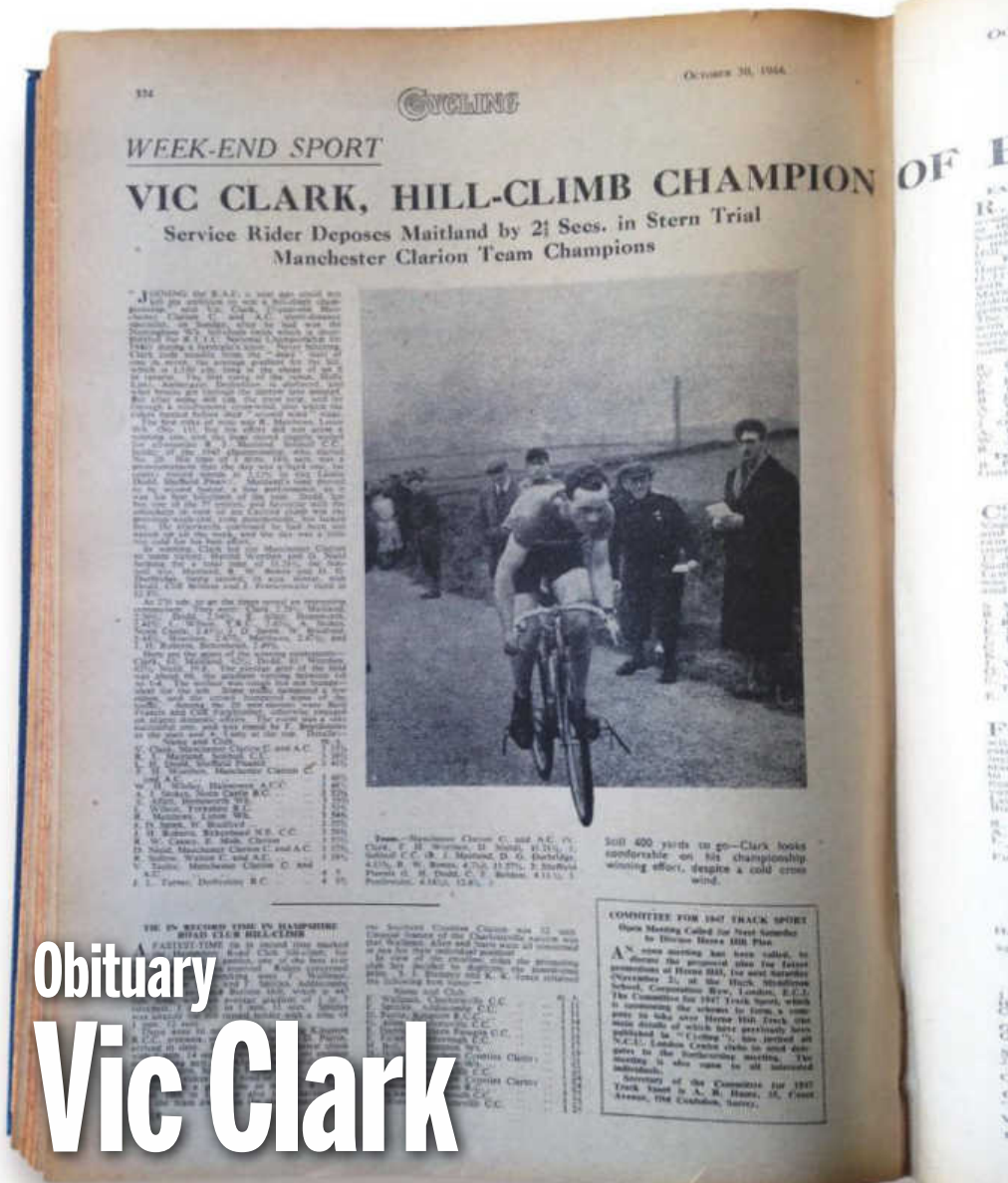
Balycky frequented the CDNW league most Thursdays, and it was at the Preston track where he won the 2008 National Youth Circuit Championships; current Orica-GreenEdge pro Simon Yates was second.

"Lewis was a Preston lad and he was always at the track," Hartley told *Cycling Weekly*.

Hartley had organised a memorial criterium in Balycky's honour in Blackpool the previous four years, but the weekly criteriums will now replace that.

"Preston was Lewis's first taste of adult racing," his father Kevin said. "He was there every week and he won there countless times."

The Fund bearing Balycky's name has supported eight riders since 2012 including Hannah Barnes, with funding helping them to live and race abroad. Four riders, including Paralympic hopeful Ed Wilson, will be supported this year.



Obituary Vic Clark

Triple hill-climb champion remembered

Vic Clark, a three-time national hill-climb champion in the 1940s, died on January 10. He was 96.

Clark came second in the first ever hill-climb championships to be recognised by the RTTC in 1944, before winning the first of his three consecutive titles two years later aged 27, at Holly Lane, Ambergate in Derbyshire.

However, it was his championship victory on Winnats Pass in the Peak District in 1947 that Clark believed to be his best ever ride. The climb was 900 metres long, reaching up to 25 per cent in gradient, and he was the last of the 90 riders to start. Unlike some of his rivals, who chose gears of up

to 67 inches, he selected a much smaller 60-inch gear, having ridden the climb a couple of weeks previously. Clark finished in a time of 3.23 — seven seconds faster than his nearest challenger.

He won his final title in 1948 on Landsdowne Lane near Bath.

Lynn Hamel, a national hill-climb champion, will read a eulogy at his funeral, having been friends with Clark since their first meeting five years ago. Clark would often offer her advice: "He always said, 'And remember, it's not won in the first half, it's won in the second.'"

The funeral takes place on January 25 at 2.30pm at St Paul's Parish Church, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria.

To do this week...

Enter Chiltern Cycling Festival sportive, Sunday, July 17

Based around the Penn Hill Estate in Buckinghamshire, entries are now open for the festival's 62 or 100-mile Amersham Brill Amersham sportive. The point-to-point ride takes in climbs including Kop Hill — used in the 2014 Tour of Britain — but the event also includes a hill-climb and a 30-mile retro ride for those using bikes and kit made pre-1989.

£25. www.chilterncyclingfestival.com

Ride options
a-plenty in Bucks



Read *The Modern MAMIL: A Cyclist's A to Z*, by Spencer Wilson and Joel Rickett

Cycling's history, parlance and equipment is documented through this witty and informative alphabetical passage. From mentions of Didi the Devil, deciphering the initialism LBS and to the description of veloporn, the book is complemented with humorous illustrations.

£8.99. www.spencerwilson.co.uk



Ride Sydenham Wheelers Reliability Trial, Sunday, January 24

Described as an "old-fashioned" reliability trial by organiser Peter Mahoney, this ride offers two routes out to Kent and the Ashdown Forest of 64 and 107km. The entry fee entitles riders to food, hot and cold drinks, and a map of the course. HQ:

Knockholt Village Hall. £10. www.sydenhamwheelers.co.uk

Get *100 Greatest Cycling Climbs DVD*

Featuring the climbs detailed in his popular books, CW contributor Simon Warren's new training DVD (totalling over 18 hours!) allows you to replicate Britain's toughest ascents during turbo training or in preparation for tackling them in person. £34.99. po.st/100climbsDVD



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THE BIG QUESTION

Who would be your ideal cycling partner, and why?

An asthmatic who's forgotten to take his/her inhaler and whose piles are playing up something rotten — I might get to the top of the climb first then!

Dave Rowe

Would have to be 'the Cannibal' Eddy Merckx. Just to be able to say that I rode with the legend, maybe learn a few things about cycling and I think only now would I be able take him in a sprint to the next lamppost (I think).

Dave Pittman

Someone who can cycle one mile an hour faster than me, can chat about a range of subjects but is content with the sound of the chain and rolling road.

Shaun Kirby

My ideal cycling partner would be someone who enjoys the ride without having to crush KOMs or climb Mount Everest. Someone who enjoys the ride... for the ride.

Michael Neidlinger

Mark Cavendish, my inspiration to take up road cycling.

Alan Young

I would love to ride with Elinor Barker. She always seems to have a smile on her face and a huge passion for cycling. I think that alone would get me doing rides I didn't think I was capable of, plus trying to keep up with Elinor would be a great challenge.

Peter Woodland

My late wife. Since last year, when she died, I ride alone with her in my mind in front of me.

Jan Magnee

James Cracknell, but I'm not sure I would be concentrating on cycling... sorry!

Sue Pitman



Who's your riding BFF?

Graeme Obree. A true cyclist.

Mike Tierney

Just me and my shadow. I love his company, his mannerisms, his songs, his politics and his ability to keep up with me.

Peter Logan

Although it sounds like a clichéd answer, I think a conversation with Bradley Wiggins on a ride would be great. To put him in his element and then listen to his ideas about the sport would be a rare thing.

Zakk Worley

Given the recent news, I think one last spin with David Bowie would be pretty special.

Richie Magnier

Ian Stannard – a big man to draft behind!

Adam Coatham

My son Chris, as he's always great company. It's awesome fun and sometimes the 'old man' still wins!

Simon Thorne

Uncle Bob. He's the reason I got into road cycling. But he is not with us, so I can't tell him, so then it would have to be my two cousins who helped fuel this addiction.

David King

Next week's big question...

What are your top tips for safe and warm winter riding?

Reply to us at cycling@timeinc.com or at www.facebook.com/CyclingWeekly

Letters

Letter of the week
wins a Lazer 02
helmet worth £69.99



Memories of Belgium

STAR
LETTER

I am sure that I speak for any reader, who like myself, is nearer to 80 than he cares to admit, in citing the Tommy Simpson article (*CW* Dec 17) as the highlight of the week. Fantastic, it captured the spirit of the man we all knew, and opened the floodgates of nostalgia for me.

It was Simmy's example that encouraged any number of us to have a go on the Continent: Belgium, Ghent and the Cafe Den Engel being the favoured place. This was where even as an amateur, one could race six days a week and, unfettered by the Corinthian ethics of the UK, receive cash prizes to help pay for the digs.

I seem to recall that one got 100 Belgian francs for 10th place and as our half-board at the Den Engel was also 100BF, that was always our aim. Incidentally, horse steak and chips was always on the menu and became a favourite.

In those days, *Cycling* was almost the official organ of the cycling establishment, the NCU. Anything to do with 'massed start', or the BLRC was seen as the work of the Devil, who was incarnate on earth in the form of Percy Stallard. So needless to say we got no recognition or encouragement from that source. In fact, the only reference I recall to the Den Engel was "a scruffy backstreet cafe that should have no part in British cycling". How wrong they were. No 'Brits Abroad' column in those days.

Despite spending the summers

of '58 and '59 in Ghent I never did make the big time, but still have an unhealthy taste for chips and dark beer, though I do pass on the horsemeat these days. Wonderful memories.

Chris McGrath, Maidenhead

Simpson's Worlds

May I congratulate you on two great historical articles (*CW* Dec 17), namely on the Flying Scot bicycles and the celebration of Tom Simpson's World Championships win 50 years ago. I feel we should honour and remember the legacy these manufacturers and riders have given our wonderful sport.

To read in the same magazine how the Flying Scot fork crowns were hand-filed then turn a couple of pages and read about the new Boardman range shows just how far design has come. Both state-of-the-art machines in their relevant era. So more of the same please.

Claire Hitchcock, email

Thank you BLRC

In the past few months, three BLRC icons have crossed the final finish line: Ian Steel, Des Robinson and Bill Baty. Many ex-league members and I competed against these mortals on numerous occasions and were honoured to have enjoyed friendships with them that lasted over 50 years. It is said that nothing lasts, but the legacy of Ian, Des and Bill's achievements are borne out by today's British racing success. It's an assured tribute to the founding principles of the BLRC. *Gino Goddard, Kenton RC, London*

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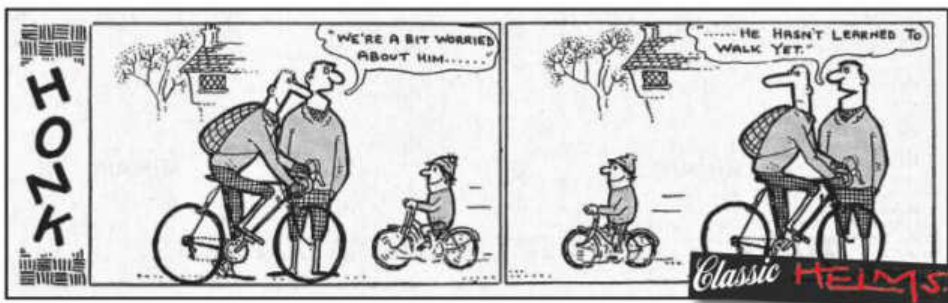
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Johnny Helms was *Cycling Weekly's* resident cartoonist from February 1946 until November 2009.

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2016 WorldTour kit review

Ellis Bacon talks to the man who created Sky's 2016 jersey, and looks over the peloton's brand-new threads

Another new year, another new cycling season — and with it an influx of new UCI WorldTour kit designs.

New designs had actually been a little thin on the ground last year, but the kit designers have pulled their fingers out for 2016, which means we can enjoy at least a smattering of brand new jerseys — alongside what are still far too many unchanged designs.

We caught up with Rapha's Ultan Coyle to tell us more about the process of working with a team to create a new jersey design — in his case the 2016 Sky kit. He also designed the new Canyon-SRAM women's team kit; more of which on page 27.

Work began on the new Sky jersey early in 2015, Coyle explains: "We'd already introduced a training range of Sky kit that featured the horizontal bars on the chest, and that had been really well received both by the team and commercially, and so Sky were quickly on board with that for this year's design for the race kit."

The team was also keen to retain a number of aspects of the jersey design from previous seasons, Coyle tells us, including the size and placement of the main Sky logo and the vertical blue line on the back of the jersey, which helps the sports directors spot their riders from the team cars behind the race, and which show up well from helicopter camera shots.

"Increased visibility was the main takeaway from those initial meetings with the team," Coyle says. And the biggest change — bar the horizontal stripes — was

that the blue in the team uniform has been changed to a slightly more 'aqua' blue.

"It was a light blue, but still quite a dark light blue, if that makes sense," laughs Coyle. "So we shifted it more towards the green spectrum — the thinking behind it being that if it was a bit lighter, then it would stand out that much more against the black. The team wanted to stand out even more in the peloton, so that was the reason behind the shift to this brighter blue."

Back to black

Coyle also looked at changing the main jersey colour to something else, "but we always went back to black".

"The team feels strong and intimidating in black," he continues, "and it's really quite intrinsic to their identity, from the bus to the team cars to the bikes."

Other teams had also gravitated towards black kit since Sky's arrival in the peloton in 2010, but, while it's still prevalent in a number of UCI women's teams, 2016 appears to have signalled something of a sea change with a lot more white suddenly having been incorporated into many of the men's WorldTour team jerseys. IAM, for example, have shifted from almost entirely dark blue to almost entirely white.

Do you have a favourite 2016 kit? Does your

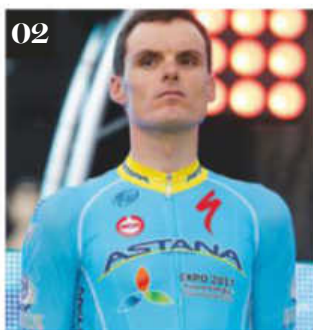
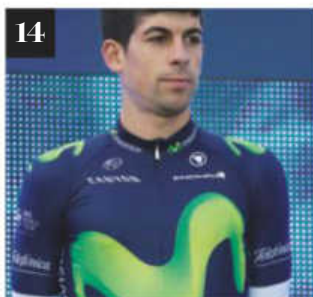
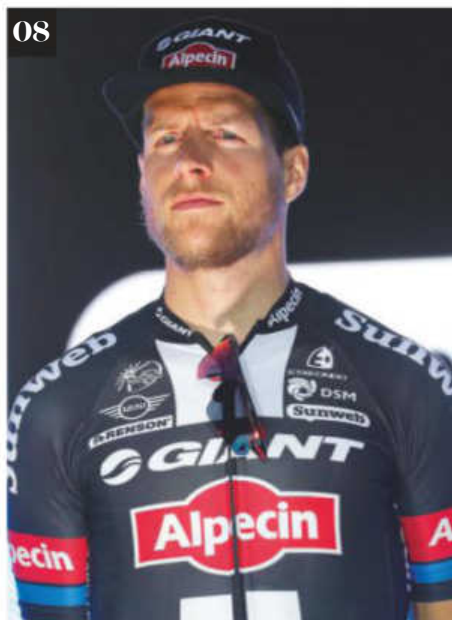
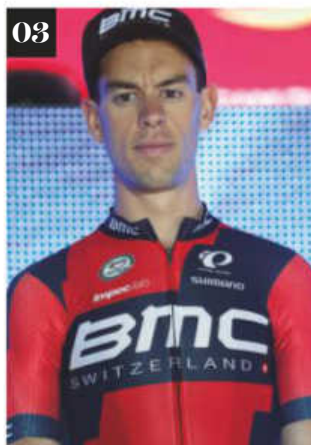
favourite team also deliver the goods when it comes to their jersey? Thinking of making a purchase this year? Here, then, is our typically irreverent annual take on this season's top squads' jerseys.

05



09





01 Ag2r La Mondiale
Our favourite brown-shorted team are luckily still brown-shorted, but inspiration has hit them from somewhere as they've decided that a blue left shoulder counts as an update to the jersey. Next year: a blue right leg. **3/5**

02 Astana
For the umpteenth year in a row, there are no great changes for the sky-blue-and-yellow team from Kazakhstan's jersey — at least not that you'd notice. There's nothing overly wrong with it, and it does a sterling job of showing off the national flag's colours. We just wish they'd do something a bit radical for change's sake — *à la Katusha*. **3/5**

03 BMC
The biggest change will be seeing Richie Porte in the colours of BMC this year; the kit itself retains its same black and red design. Let's hope Porte's not too much of a menace to Rohan Dennis and Tejay van Garderen for the leader's role: it's a team with a lot of chiefs in 2016. **3/5**

04 Cannondale
While the old 2014 Cannondale kit might have been a little on the gaudy side, this year's all-green offering combines the 'Vaughters argyle' with logos and textures for a tasty little number. Almost as visible as the Tinkoff kit, too, for us sensible types who want to be seen by nuts drivers. **4/5**

05 Dimension Data
Last year's MTN-Qhubeka squad has a new name — and a new kit. It's out with the black-and-white stripes and in with a black or white kit. We still had zero clue what was going on as we went to press. Is the kit black or is it white? The

team's powers that be seemed keen to keep us all in suspense*. **3/5**

*may not be in suspense

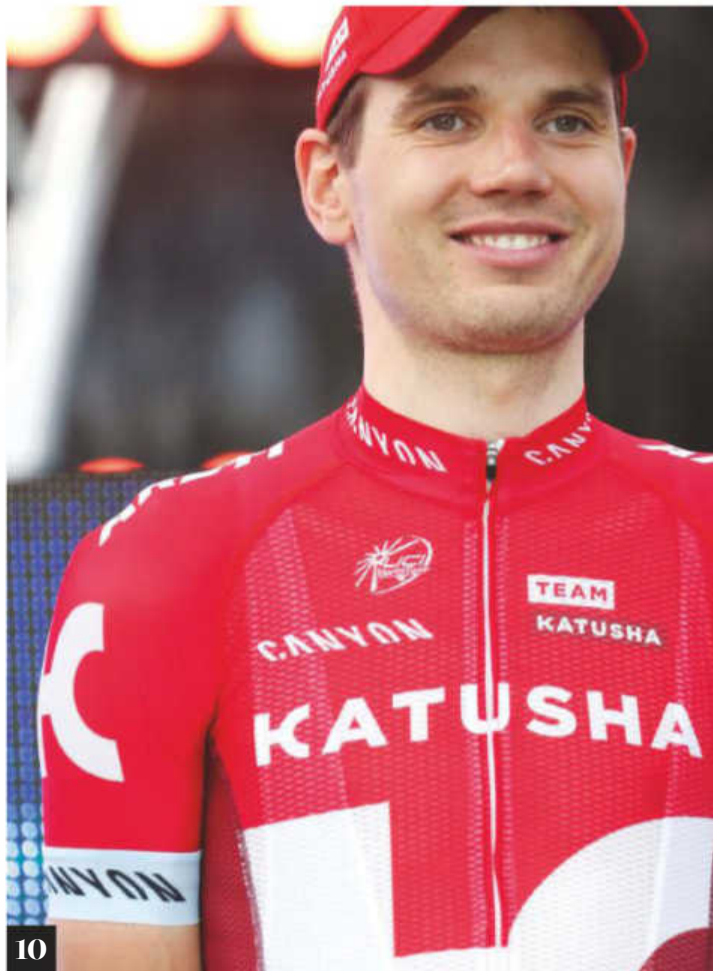
06 Etixx-Quick Step Hubba-hubba! Wholesale change for the new year, and we reckon this shade of blue makes for one of the nicest kits the Belgian team's plumped for in a while. And the flashes of yellow of German supermarket Lidl's new sponsorship add a certain *je ne sais quoi* for 2016. After all, "Every Lidl helps." **5/5**

07 FDJ No great shake-up for the French outfit's outfit for 2016, which is a shame, as it's not our favourite FDJ kit ever from a team that's been around since 1997. You could say that it's a bit of a lottery as to how good the kit will be each season. **2/5**

08 Giant-Alpecin One of the classiest kit designs of 2015 returns for the new season with only a few minor changes thanks to new sponsors. Marcel Kittel has left the team — and may or may not have changed his shampoo — while new arrival Laurens Ten Dam will use his Alpecin for his beard. Fact. **5/5**

09 IAM It's out with the navy, red and white number, and in with this mainly white design, with navy and red flourishes. You see, other teams? You can make our miserable lives more exciting by considerably changing your jersey without losing your identity. Cool as an IAM cat. **4/5**

10 Katusha Woof! The biggest change in a team's kit in some years! Gone is the Russian red, white and blue; hello sort-of red-fade! And a big





'Special K' logo. Oh, yes — this deserves a big 5/5 for sheer adventure. We're still trying to decide whether we like it or not; we need to see it in action for a bit first. Ask us again around April. **5/5**

11 Lampre-Merida

There are only a few subtle changes to Lampre-Merida's so-loud-it's-almost-good indigo, pink and green kit, which means they still look like a flock of Barney the dinosaurs. [We used that 'joke' last year — Ed]. Visible in the peloton, too. **2/5**

12 LottoNL-Jumbo

More canary yellow from the Dutch team for 2016 — and we say, "Hurrah!" Their all-yellow ensemble of 2015 did, however, require a kit change for the Tour de France to avoid a yellow-jersey clash, and the team's stuck with a similar part-white design for this season. **3/5**

13 Lotto-Soudal

No change for the Belgian Lotto-Soudal team's kit for 2016; it even still says 'Live your dream' down the back. There are few bright-red jerseys in the pro peloton these days, though, so it does an admirable job of standing out, which is what it's all about, after all. **3/5**

14 Movistar

The Spanish team stick with their navy and lime green colours for 2016, and who can blame them? This is a team on the up, where marquee riders Nairo Quintana and Alejandro Valverde are ably backed by a quality roster, which includes British time trial star Alex Dowsett. The only kit change is a move to white pockets on the back where the numbers go. Or did they run out of dye? **4/5**



15



07

"At Tinkoff the fluoro yellow remains — hi-vis rarely looks as good as this"

15 Orica-GreenEdge

The Australian squad is a veritable hotbed of young superstars for 2016. Shame they have to wear the same kit they've been wearing for the past few years. Hopefully it's not actually the same kit. A case, perhaps, of "if it ain't broke" — or whatever the Australian equivalent is. **3/5**

16 Sky

There's the welcome addition of the stripes on the chest, and the blue's been lightened a little: this is the biggest change to the British team's kit for a while, and we like it. Will it prevent Chris Froome looking at his stem, though? **4/5**

17 Tinkoff

The fluoro yellow remains, while the grey-blue sections replace the bold blue of departing sponsor Saxo Bank. And in comes the Tinkoff Bank logo on the chest, which some readers might remember from the days of the old Tinkoff Credit Systems team. Hi-vis rarely looks this good. **4/5**

18 Trek-Segafredo

Still present are the subtle white pinstripes on the lower black section of the jersey — now also featuring new sponsor Segafredo's logo — while the white top half provides ample contrast so as to be able to pick out Fabian Cancellara in various bleak northern European landscapes on his way to winning all the Spring Classics in what might be his final season. **3/5**



Women's kits

There are some stunning kits on the 2016 women's circuit too. One new kit, in particular, appears to have everyone talking — that of the new Canyon-SRAM team, designed by the same designer, Rapha's Ultan Coyle, as the new Sky kit. Not only has it upped the game for women's team kits, but for team kits in general.

"The idea for the design came from warning tape — the kind you'd see on building sites, perhaps wrapped around scaffolding poles so that you don't walk into them," Coyle explains. "I wrapped a mannequin in warning tape, cut it off and digitised it, and then went about recolouring it and restyling it. I tried to make it not too masculine, but then not too feminine, either; I didn't want it to be gender-specific."

Another black kit, and a favourite of ours — that of Wiggle-High5 — enjoys only subtle changes from last year, principally new secondary sponsor High5 replacing Honda on the front of the jersey, while Britain's Lizzie Armitstead will be swapping out the popular Boels-Dolmans sunrise orange-red kit for the world champion's stripes for most of 2016.

Vertical stripes are still the main focus of the Liv-Plantur team's kit in 2016, which features an almost identical design to that of 'brother' team Giant-Alpecin, only with green and purple accents rather than red and blue.

But the general design choices of men's kits versus women's kits this season? We say the women's teams edge it by a wheel-length.

Wonderful world of keirin

Japanese keirin racing is the equivalent of horse racing in the UK — ruthless, thrilling and incredibly lucrative. *Cycling Weekly* talks to one of the sport's thoroughbreds, Toyoki Takeda, to learn how it all works





Sophie Hurcom

Not many cyclists would say they got into the sport because of the money on offer. For most it's a passion and love that gets them out on their bikes every day. However, for Toyoki Takeda, one of Japan's top keirin riders, it was purely money that drew him to cycling.

"I used to be a good speed skater and went to the Winter Olympics," he says. "But even after the Olympics I couldn't live on speed skating — it's not a professional sport. But then there was keirin in Japan and I could make money and live on that."

The keirin in Japan is a world away from the track event we're used to seeing at the Olympics — it's a gambling sport, comparable to horse racing in the UK. A staggering 1.5 trillion Yen (£8.6

billion) is reportedly bet on the outcome of races annually, while an estimated 57 million fans watch racing each year.

There are more than 3,000 registered keirin riders in the country, who all start on a salary of around £70,000, while the huge prize funds on offer mean the best riders, like Takeda, can make millions. In 2014 he was the sport's top ranked rider, taking home more than £1.2 million in prize money.

Riders make the big bucks by winning. Keirin is a full-time profession and Takeda races around 100 times a year, winning roughly 40-50 events. In 2014 he won the sport's biggest race, the Keirin Grand Prix, held every December in different venues around the country, and contested by the best nine riders that year. His translator describes him as the "people's favourite" rider. ▶

“Yes, I have a lot of fans,” Takeda says. “But it’s different from other sports. I’m a target for betting because I am good, I am reliable — fans are happy to make money from me.”

Keirin originated in Japan in 1948, but rather than racing inside a hot and stuffy velodrome on wooden boards, as we’re used to seeing in London or Manchester, there it takes place on outdoor, concrete tracks. There are 47 stadiums across the country, typically 500 metres in length — twice as long as the Olympic standard. It’s still an explosive track discipline where riders line up behind a Derny pacer, before tussling for position and battling full-speed for the line, but the racing is significantly rougher. Contested at speeds of 70kph, shoving and blocking other riders is commonplace, as are crashes.

Elite education

Dedication is clearly a trait required to race Japanese keirin. Takeda, like all other riders, spent a year at Japan’s prestigious Keirin School — necessary for anyone who wants to become a professional. Located in a remote area in Shuzenji, near Mount Fuji and roughly 150km from Tokyo, only 70 students attend each year although 10 times that number apply, with entrants having to pass a tough set of entry tests.

“Everything, including family history, and if you have any flaws in your career — for example, if you have been arrested — that kind of thing, is all checked. If you have had a traffic accident, already it’s a no,” Takeda explains.

“If you pass that investigation then it goes two ways. One is a bicycle time trial and the other is a physical test. Pass those things, then it’s a paper

“Discipline, ritual and etiquette all form a large part of Japanese culture and way of life”

test, just like you have at school — mathematics, language.”

Such is the competition to get a place at the school, some applicants hire personal tutors to help them pass, while Takeda actually failed on his first attempt.

Discipline, ritual and etiquette all form a large part of Japanese culture and way of life, but it’s easy to see why visitors often make comparisons between Keirin School and a military boot camp. Training and classes take place six days a week. Riders only get Sundays off, have to get permission to leave the school on those days and wear their uniform when they’re out. Days begin at 6am and don’t finish until 10pm, and contain a mix of training — hill-climbing on gradients up to 14 per cent, lap and race training on one of the four tracks at the school, and roller and gym work — as well as time in the classroom learning race theory and general life skills. Students even have to dress the same, fold their clothes and make their bed correctly. Get it wrong, and you can’t participate in training.

“They say in Japan Keirin School is the hardest type of school,” Takeda says. “Every action is fixed; time that I am allowed to take a bath, time to have a meal or time to make a call to family. It’s very, very strict and also everything is a group activity, so there’s no private time.

“The training is also fixed, which means I could never do my own. In order to train for myself I had to get up early, as early as 3am sometimes, then do school training.”

Ready to race

Once out of school, riders graduate onto the keirin circuit. Racing is divided into categories based on the six rankings riders fall into — all are confusingly labelled with a different letter and number combination that seems to follow no pattern, starting with A3 at the bottom, up to SS at the top. The only way a rider can move up is by winning.

Many British riders have gone out



Many riders wear body armour, such is the ferocity of the racing

to Japan to race and hone their skills including Sir Chris Hoy, Becky James and Matt Crampton — the latter spent five months there in 2009 and 2010.

“It’s a very different culture,” Crampton says. “Being an athlete isn’t really a job in the UK, whereas those guys [in Japan] go to school, graduate with a keirin qualification as such, or licence, and then race. They race 365 days a year and it’s a job. It’s quite different how they approach it.”

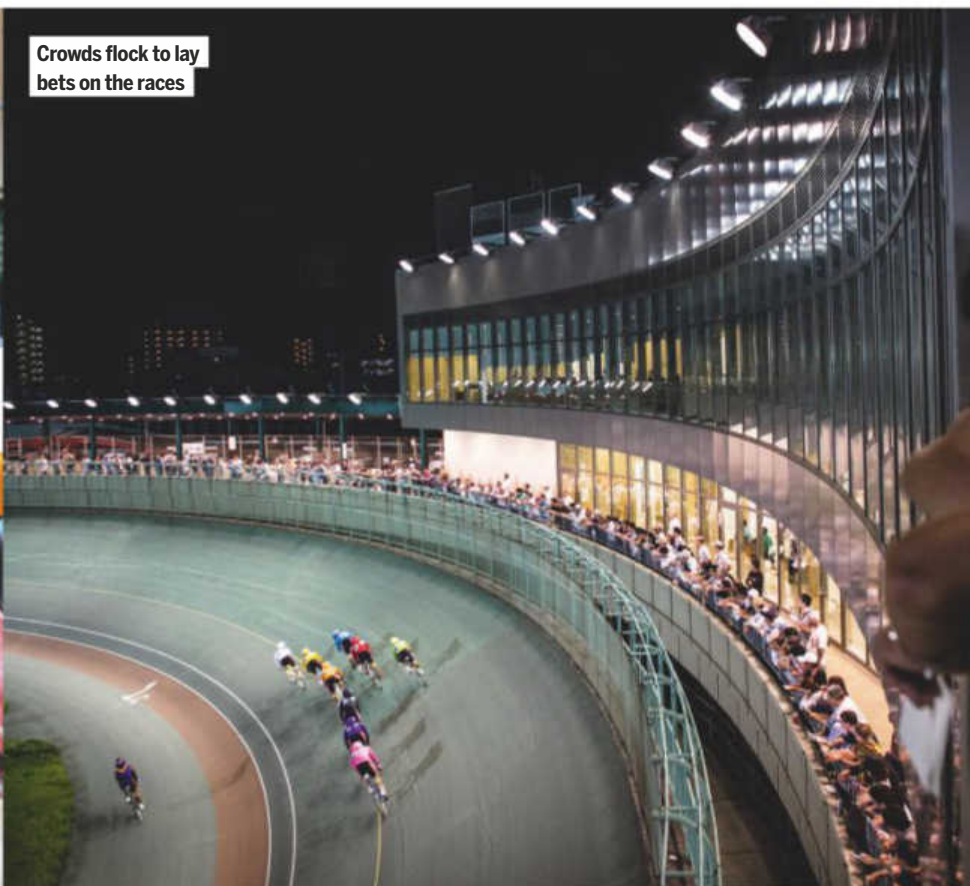
The gambling aspect of keirin in Japan has a big impact. The day before a race riders have to check into the velodrome and are locked away until the event. Any contact with the outside world — including by phone or the internet — is restricted, to prevent them being bribed. However, before a race the riders then go around the track together, potentially forming allegiances with other riders in view of the fans, to give them more information to help them choose who to bet on.

The will to win

Japanese keirin is also a lot more physical than it is in Europe. While in international races riders would be



Takeda is one of Japan’s top keirin racers



Crowds flock to lay bets on the races

disqualified for moving off their line into another rider's path, in Japan, shoving and barging is acceptable.

"There is contact so I wore padding," says Crampton. "I wore a leather jacket almost, not as thick as a motorcycle jacket, but with pads. You can get full body armour suits with plastic pads which some of the riders use."

Yet, as Crampton explains, the contact isn't a ploy to make races more dramatic. It's all down to the gambling. "They [the fans] have to see you've done everything to try and win, and that's where the contact comes in," he says. "If you've bet on someone and they get boxed in and almost give up they'd be really frustrated."

"I like the contact — if you're out in front you didn't have to worry about what line you were in, if you stepped into someone it wasn't a big deal. If you're boxed in here [in the UK] and you've got good legs, you can't really push someone out the way. It was good in the sense you could get your race out."

Takeda, who has broken bones seven times, including his skull, during his career, agrees, admitting that a strong will to win is required: "There are



No fancy kit branding here...

“It’s a bit like boarding school”

Taz Darling, cycling photographer, visited the Keirin School in 2010

“I wanted to go to the Keirin School because that was, for me, really more interesting [than going to a race]. It was interesting to see where all the culture and discipline when they’re racing begins. Being cut off at the school, not having their phones during term time, being able to phone home once a week kind of goes with how they manage the betting side once they are keirin racers.

“It doesn’t feel like a boot camp, it doesn’t

feel repressive in any way. I think it’s just a bit like boarding school — everybody in dorms. How it can look is not how it feels. It doesn’t feel hugely disciplinarian from the top down; it feels much more like a joined community — everybody pulling together and everybody having an individual responsibility to do their best. There wasn’t a lot of ego evident — all the riders seemed very humble.

“The training was really brutal — they work out hard. They’ve got this one really long track with a really steep hill at the end

of it. It’s goes for however many hundred metres and then has this stupidly steep hill at the end of it.

“I went to the Keirin Grand Prix race too. A counter shows how much is being bet in the stadium and the rest of Japan at the time that the race is happening. It’s a little bit like Red Nose Day — you can see how much is flooding in. The guys themselves are like rock stars. There are fans outside, all screaming and shouting, and they all drive up in Humvees — exactly as you’d expect.”





Fearless riders go head-to-head on huge outdoor concrete tracks

many cases of riders falling off so it's quite important that you don't give up."

Unique conditions

The racing conditions also mean a different type of fitness is required, as the track surfaces are tougher and races longer, a benefit to the British riders that go there.

"The track is a lot heavier than an indoor wood 250," says Crampton. "The bikes are traditionally made, so they're steel; they've got spoke wheels; the tyres don't go to 220psi, they're around 120 or 100psi so there isn't that top, top speed element. Well, there is top speed but it's harder to get there. Once the pacer pulls off on a 500 track you go a long way without a big banking or anything to generate speed from. It was really good physically, the training effects are huge."

Yet despite Japanese keirin being rougher and more physical, the average age of the top riders is higher than that of international pro track cyclists, with riders racing into their 40s and even 50s.

Tactical experience is important and Takeda says a "brain" is the quality keirin riders require most, while blocking, shoving and barging other riders is accepted. "People try to prevent a fast rider going past, so experience is important," he says.

"No top level riders are in their 20s. If you look at winners' ages for the past five years, all are almost 40."

However, Takeda is clearly aware that as he gets older his body has limitations. Two years ago he started working with Wattbike, in a bid to prolong his career by changing his training methods. Unlike typical keirin riders, Takeda's training methods are all set by coach Eddie Fletcher in the UK, who then monitors all his training sessions and data.

When Tokyo hosts the Olympic Games in 2020, the two worlds of keirin will collide. And though there may be a range of differences between keirin in Japan and the kind raced in the Olympics, one thing that's clearly the same between the two is the desire riders have to win.

Though it may have been for financial reasons that got Takeda into keirin racing, it's not money that motivates him every day. "Races are frequent, so even if you don't win the next chance will come," he says.

"I never forget the feeling of when I win. I'm always pursuing that feeling." ■

Matt Gibson: a glorious year

Successful 2015 bodes well for the young track talent

Sophie Hurcom

Few young British riders had as successful a 2015 as 19-year-old Matt Gibson. The teenager from Lymm, Cheshire, started his year with a bronze medal at the Track World Cup in Cali as part of a fledgling team pursuit squad, and ended it with a gold in the same discipline alongside Sir Bradley Wiggins at the European Track Championships in October. In between, he made his debut at the Track World Championships and won two golds at the U23 European Track Champs. Not bad going for a rider who describes his year as “up and down”.

“I wasn’t really expecting to get a ride in the team pursuit at the senior Euros until quite late on,” says Gibson, who recently started his second year on the British Cycling Senior Academy. “It was a nice surprise. I’d been put down as a reserve but I knew that I wouldn’t ride if Heiko [Salzwedel, coach] thought it better that one of the other riders did it.”

Gibson competed in round one in Grenchen, Switzerland, alongside Wiggins, Owain Doull and Steven Burke, as part of the six-man squad that went on to win gold.

“It’s a great experience; not many people get to ride with guys like Bradley Wiggins, so to be able to do it at such a young age, I’m really pleased,” he says. “Brad’s really supportive of me joining the team and I really felt like he welcomed me into the team quite willingly.”

Gibson has been making steady progression on the track, and has notched up performances on the road too. In 2014 he won the U23 Ghent Six-Day, partnering Chris Lawless, and took a solo victory at the Tour Series in Peterborough.

Already, however, it’s clear to see how determined he is. He admits he was “pretty gutted” to not win an individual medal at the Junior European Track Championships in

2014, but when he returned in 2015, having stepped up to U23 level, he came away with two golds; one in the scratch race, the other in the team pursuit, where the squad set a blistering sub-four minute pace. “It’s really good to come back a year later and get two golds,” he says, “stepping up the age category and still to be able to compete against the older guys and win.”

Academy bound

It was Gibson’s performance in Cali, in January last year at the World Cup that really set up the rest of his 2015. He travelled to Colombia as part of a team pursuit squad made up entirely of Academy riders who had little expectation on their shoulders. They came away with bronze, the GB team’s only medal.

The following month he was a surprise selection for the Track World Championships in Paris, where he finished an impressive sixth in the scratch race.

“I’d done track races as far as elite was concerned, but not the Worlds,” Gibson says. “I went in knowing what the level was going to be like and I gained a lot of confidence from that, knowing that it’s not too far away — the best in the world aren’t a million times better than I can be when I’m going well. I gained a lot of confidence from that.”

This year will involve more road racing for Gibson. He will swap Manchester for Italy for seven months of the year, and move with the Academy men’s endurance squad to their new training base on the Continent.

Yet Gibson hopes to get the new season under way in a similar fashion to last year. He was due to ride the final round of the Track World Cup in Hong Kong last weekend, before illness forced him to pull out, while he would love to get a spot and ride at the Track World Championships in London at the start of March. “That would be a great experience,” he says. ■

**“The best in the world aren’t
a million miles better than I
can be when I’m going well”**





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Have cantilevers had their day?

Fewer and fewer cyclo-cross bikes can be bought with cantilever brakes. Will discs take over completely as the brake of choice for stopping in the mud? *Paul Norman* investigates...

It used to be that cantilever brakes were the only option for cyclo-cross bikes. A conventional rim brake caliper does not provide enough clearance for wider tyres and muddy conditions, so cyclo-cross bikes would make use of the cantilever's straddle wire and outward-facing lever arms to provide the necessary space around the tyres.

But since 2010 the UCI has allowed disc brakes to be used in cyclo-cross races. Using a disc rotor and caliper mounted near the wheel axle moves the braking mechanicals well away from the muddy rim and further from sources of contamination, leading to more consistent performance.

In the five years since the UCI's decision, it's become increasingly rare to find cyclo-cross bikes sold with cantis. David Devine, who designs bikes for Cannondale told us that the brand first offered a disc-braked cross bike in 2003 and that from 2013 its entire cross bike range has been disc-braked. He's seen the advantages of discs both in terms of

better tyre clearance and integration into the bike's design. He adds that they also offer improved rider confidence, control and modulation out on the course, regardless of weather conditions.

Kinesis Bikes has hedged its bets with its latest CX Race frameset, which has both disc and removable cantilever mounts. But Bruce Dalton, its brand manager, tells us that 80 per cent of the frames are bought with disc brake forks, indicating the scale of the shift away from cantis. So is there a future for rim braking in cyclo-cross?

Highest level still using cantis

Some professional cyclo-cross racers still race using cantis. Sven Nys regularly switched between discs and cantis on his bright yellow Trek. He rode many of the early-season races on discs including his 50th World Cup win at Koksijde, but has ridden cantis in other races including the more recent World Cup race in Heusden-Zolder, site of the upcoming World Cyclo-Cross Championships.



The cantilever brake could soon be a museum piece

For many of the professionals, weight is the overriding factor guiding their decision on brake choice. With cantilevers still around half a kilogram lighter than disc brakes, there's a significant gain, particularly for lighter riders.

On the other hand, a rim without a braking surface can be built significantly lighter and any weight saving in the rim is significant as it improves wheel responsiveness and acceleration —

Yes



Bruce Dalton

Kinesis Bikes brand manager and Team Kinesis rider

This year I've switched entirely to riding disc-braked cyclo-cross bikes. Being able to slow down better lets you go faster as you can brake later and harder. Discs provide more predictable braking and require less force to operate than cantis. Although there's a slight weight penalty the wheel's rim can be made lighter to compensate for this.

No



Isla Rowntree,

Founder Islabikes and three-time UK cyclo-cross champion

Or at least not yet. For lighter riders the weight difference between discs and cantis is significant and the gap in stopping power is not so important. Current hydraulic disc brake levers are also a bit too large to be comfortable for those with smaller hands. Over time disc technology is likely to prevail, but for racing it's not quite there yet.



important in the start line sprint.

The top pros tend to switch back and forth between cantilevers and disc brakes dependent on how technical and undulating the course is and what the weather is like. On a more technical course the ability to brake later and with more certainty is likely to override the weight penalty of using discs, whereas a faster, flatter course is likely to favour those using cantilevers.

For the amateur rider, disc brakes are easier to set up and maintain than cantis. Poorly set up cantis can be noisy and offer less consistent braking than a disc brake.

This is why Colnago, while still providing pros with the cantilever option, produce all their commercially available cross framesets with disc brake fittings.

"We don't see cantis being completely replaced," says sales manager Mauro Mondonico, "But disc brakes are by far the most popular choice now for customers."

OUR TAKE

Fully-supported pros with a team of mechanics are likely to continue to switch between canti and disc brakes dependent on course and conditions, but even among the elite, disc brakes are increasingly gaining traction.

For the rest of us, disc brakes are becoming the norm and will continue to take market share from canti-equipped bikes. With disc brake technology becoming more effective and available at lower price points, hydraulics becoming prevalent and their weight penalty reduced by products such as SRAM 1, disc brakes are set to increase their domination of the cyclo-cross bike market.

HOT STUFF

Rapha Pro Team Shadow Jersey

Rapha's new Pro Team Shadow is designed to be a protective and breathable jersey/jacket for use in changeable weather. It was developed with Team Sky. Despite the eye-watering cost, have we finally found a jersey to knock the Castelli Gabba off its perch?

Contact:

www.rapha.cc

Price: £220

Test report: Feb



Rudy Project Tralyx

Rudy Project produces a great range of sunglasses and helmets and we like its latest eyewear offering, Tralyx. Reading through the sales blurb we are not totally sure what 'unique and powerful dynamic design language' is, but we like the looks and if they are as aero and as well ventilated as Rudy Project claims, we shouldn't have any problems during testing.

Contact: www.yellow-limited.com

Price: £94.49

Test report: March



Fabric Silicone tape

Fabric has established itself as a go-to brand for bar tape and saddles. Its latest Silicone tape, which is designed to be ultra-soft and durable, adds another option to its stable. Due to its tacky nature, you should be able to re-wrap easily and it comes in a handful of colours.

Contact:

www.fabric.cc

Price:

£29.99

Test report:

March





Edco Roches wheels £549.99

Sitting at £550 these wheels fall in the realm of many people's upgrade budget and you even get a pair of Continental Grand Sport tyres (not pictured) included in the price. These 25cs sit pretty wide mainly due to the Roches' internal rim width of 20mm. Out on the road the wheels feel pretty robust. Despite the wide tyres, they struggle with rough surfaces and while this can get pretty tiresome on long rides, the flipside is you get a stiff set of hoops that'll use all your effort effectively. They've lasted a few months of pretty horrible weather and still run smooth and true. Finally, thanks to Edco's MultiSys cassette body I can interchange between SRAM/Shimano or Campag bikes. *Symon Lewis*
1,655g www.edco-wheels.co.uk

9



The Roches are a neat all-round package

Campag and Shimano-ready cassette body



HOY Vulpine Men's Long-Sleeve Roubaix Jersey £79.99

This jersey features Roubaix fabric, which is very soft and comfortable against the skin, while providing a good degree of stretch, insulation and breathability. As with much of the Hoy Vulpine line, this jersey sizes up large, best suiting those with a sprinter's build. Going down one size I got a good fit, with minimal bunching on the chest. There are three pockets on the rear and a fourth zipped pocket large enough for a phone. Entry to the three pockets felt tight and was awkward with gloves on. Furthermore, the two side pockets are a little smaller than we would like.

Oliver Bridgewood **292g**
www.vulpine.cc

7

B'Twin 700 Jean Christophe-Péraud Special Edition £80

Product of the week

Firstly, if the striking blue and red is not to your taste, B'Twin will be making other colour options available for 2016. The super-stiff carbon soles are better than some much more expensive shoes I've worn — you'll be hard pushed to find something of comparable quality at a similar price. One of the small bugbears of the previous versions of these shoes was the narrow fit, but the updated 700s offer a sufficiently wide and comfortable fit. If you are after a top performance shoe, but don't want to spend a huge amount of cash, the B'Twin 700 shoes should be top of your list. *Oliver Bridgewood* **652g (size 45)**
www.decathlon.co.uk

10





Sealskinz Neoprene Halo Overshoe **£40.00**

Halos have red LEDs in each heel to aid visibility on the road. You just press the lights to switch through the constant and two flashing modes, and when it comes to washing the overshoes they're easily removed. With Kevlar reinforced heels and toes the neoprene overshoes are built to last. The side-entry zip is good quality and has reflective bands. When paired with thick socks they kept my feet warm on all but the coldest days. The only negatives are that they are quite a challenge to get on. The main difficulty is getting the light over the heel lugs and, like most overshoes, in torrential rain, the water soon gets inside the neoprene.

Chris Hovenden **210g pair**
www.sealskinz.com

8



Specialized Airnet helmet **£100**

Despite the name and the visual similarity to Giro's Synthe semi-aero helmet, Specialized isn't making any specific claims about the aerodynamic benefits of its new Airnet helmet. Instead, this is just a seriously comfortable helmet, one of those lids that you're barely aware you're wearing. The dial adjustment system allows a precise fit, although the small dial does make adjusting on the fly a little fiddly, especially with gloves on. The merino pads on the inside also help with comfort, while the slim looks are impressive given the mid-range price point.

The Airnet helmet is also available in white or black.

Henry Robertshaw **294g**
www.specialized.com

9

Brooks Dalston Knapsack **£130**

Do not be fooled by the vintage appearance; this is a well-made, practical rucksack. The Italian manufactured bag is made from a waterproof canvas-like material and has a capacity of 20 litres. Inside there are three pockets and a compartment for a 15-inch laptop. My belongings remained dry when the heavens opened and the wide shoulder straps were surprisingly comfortable — however a waist strap, in addition to the chest strap, would be a good idea to prevent the bag moving up and down when riding.



The back padding is thin, meaning you have to be careful how you pack the bag and more zipped internal pockets would be advantageous.

Chris Hovenden
834g
www.brooks-england.com

7

Dhb ASV Roubaix bib-shorts **£70.00**

I'm a fan of fleece-lined bib-shorts for winter riding: pair them with leg warmers for an equivalent to winter tights or with knee warmers for three-quarter tights. And there's the advantage of a double layer of fabric to keep your thigh muscles warmer. Or I just wear them on their own when it's a bit cool for thin Lycra shorts — which is most of the year in the UK. So I've got good use out of the ASV Roubaix shorts. They're also very comfortable, with wide straps and single-layer leg grippers to keep them in place.

Paul Norman
202g
www.wiggle.co.uk



9

LONG TERM TEST

18 months later

Syncros Glueless Patch Kit **£2.50**

Patches in your saddlebag are insurance for when your puncture count outnumbers the spare tubes you carry (one on a short outing, six on a trip to Cape Wrath). Last thing you want in your hour of need then is for the pre-applied adhesive to have dried out as mine did. **3** Glueless indeed. HG



Syncros
lost their stick

Can't live without

Knog Blinder Road R70 **£48.99**

If you want to ensure you're seen after dark, then look no further than the Knog Blinder Road R70. The 70 lumen output is enough to put riders off riding too close behind you, which means other road users are certain to see you, with the good range of light modes to choose from too. SL

www.todayscyclist.co.uk



Blinding offering
from Knog

Giant AnyRoad CoMax £1,399

Tested by: Paul Norman Miles ridden: 137
Size tested: 54cm Weight: 10.05kg/22.16lb

The AnyRoad CoMax is the top model in Giant's growing range of gravel bikes. With its strange looks, fat tyres and more relaxed geometry, this machine and its type occupy a strange but undoubtedly growing place in the market

somewhere between endurance and cyclo-cross bikes.

Although born out of a demand in the US where gravel roads and fast, dusty trails are more commonplace, we're seeing an emerging interest in them on this side of the pond. Whether they offer anything over cyclo-cross bikes on Britain's muddier byways and rutted farm tracks is still up for debate but that won't stop manufacturers pushing them out.

While most of Giant's range is constructed from aluminium, this top model has been built using its carbon-fibre composite technology.

Frame

The AnyRoad's frame tends to attract comment: particularly the kink in the top tube, which sends it down to meet the seatstays some way down the seat tube. Giant pioneered compact frame geometry in its road bikes for a more rigid frame with lower overall weight. The AnyRoad's design has the same effect, albeit in a less conventional form.

The head tube is tall and the reach quite short, resulting in

quite a high riding position. As with the frame, the AnyRoad's fork is carbon-fibre composite, although it has an aluminium steerer. Both the frame and fork have a huge amount of clearance, so they can easily take wide tyres and avoid mud clogging.

Specification

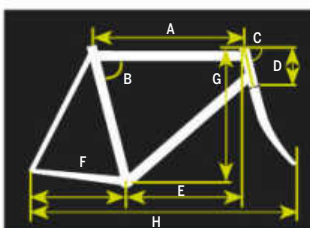
The AnyRoad CoMax comes with a Shimano 105 compact chainset coupled with an 11-32 tooth cassette, giving a vast range for faster riding on-road and for negotiating steeper and more difficult terrain on and off-road.

Giant makes its own wheels and the AnyRoad's P-X2s come with quick-release hubs with sealed bearings and tubeless-ready rims. The tyres are Giant's own too and are 32mm wide. They have a central section

Giant AnyRoad CoMax £1,399

Frame	■■■■■■■■■ 8/10
Specification	■■■■■■■■■ 8/10
Ride	■■■■■■■■■ 9/10
Value	■■■■■■■■■ 8/10

Distributor	www.giant-bicycles.com
Frame	Giant CoMax carbon composite
Fork	Carbon fork with alloy steerer
Size range	S, M, L, XL
Weight	10.05kg/22.12lb
Groupset	Shimano 105 11sp
Alterations	None
Gear ratios	11-32t cassette, 50/34 chainset
Wheels	Giant P-X2 disc
Tyres	Bontrager R1 Hard-Case Lite 23c
Bar	Giant Connect XR Ergo-Control, alloy
Stem	Giant Connect carbon composite, 27.2mm
Seatpost	Giant Connect Forward
Saddle	Body Geometry Toupe Comp Gel



SIZE TESTED: M

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
54cm	73.5"	73.8"	18.5cm	36.3cm	43cm	59.6cm	101.6cm



No one said versatility had to be pretty...

with a very low-profile tread, augmented by more substantial side lugs. Braking is provided by TRP Spyre mechanical discs.

Unusually Giant provides bar-top levers in addition to the standard Shimano brake shifters. This is a welcome addition as it provides an alternative braking position, which I found useful on longer, more shallow descents.

Ride

With its relatively narrow tyres and limited tread, and a top-end gear range which matches most endurance road bikes, the AnyRoad

can be ridden fast on-road with little rolling resistance. It rides well on unfinished farm tracks too, with enough volume in the tyres to even out bumps.

On typical UK bridlepaths it's a slightly different story. There's significant loss of traction on muddy sections due to the lack of tyre tread. I dropped the pressure to around 40psi, at which the tyres still rolled well on road, but offered vastly improved grip on the soft stuff. At this pressure I was able to

progress well even on properly muddy paths, although this did expose me to a risk of pinch-flattening when the rims bottomed out on rockier sections (fortunately I

didn't). The wide clearances are also an asset and clogging was never an issue even on the stickiest paths.



Lots of clearance for wider tyres – or mud



Bar-top levers provide another braking option

Value

Giant has managed to hit a sweet spot with the AnyRoad CoMax: a carbon frame with quality components at a price below £1,500. There are some nice extras like the bar-top levers too, although hydraulic braking might be a better option for its lighter action and is increasingly appearing on bikes at around this price.

Giant's own-brand components, which finish off the build, are of good quality too. The Giant saddle sits on a carbon seatpost and the shallow-drop alloy bars are well wrapped to provide cushioning against vibrations. The company's own-brand wheels are certainly a match for branded products.

Verdict

It may be a bit of an ugly duckling, but it does its job very competently and is an efficient and comfortable bike to ride on the road, with the wider tyres adding comfort without much additional rolling resistance.

It's also a fun bike to ride off-road and is well-equipped to deal with British winter conditions. It would definitely benefit from more aggressive tyres for those looking to explore muddier routes and there's plenty of scope to increase tyre width without impacting on mud clearance. Although not a light bike, the AnyRoad's wide gear range makes light work of steeper slopes and it's easy to shift your weight

around on technical terrain due to the short reach and upright ride.

For a go-anywhere machine, the AnyRoad is a good option and with its mudguard eyelets is even ready for winter commuting duties.

8

For

- Fast on-road ride with go-anywhere potential
- Wide gearing to tackle mixed conditions
- Good clearance for mud or wider tyres

Against

- Ride position is quite upright
- Tyres are not ideal for UK off-road riding conditions
- Looks may not appeal



Saddlebags

James Bracey tests five of the best saddlebags that'll keep all your essentials secure for when you need them

What?

The five saddlebags (or seatpacks to some) on test are all of the compact variety which tuck neatly and securely away under your saddle. All are big enough to fit a spare tube, multi-tool, tyre levers and a few other small ride essentials. Velcro straps are the most popular fixing, although two featured here come with a clamp that fits directly on to the saddle rails.

Why?

A decent saddlebag will quietly stow all the essential kit that could save your ride, and mean you don't have to stuff your rear pockets so full that your jersey or jacket sits uncomfortably on your back. Despite their size, saddlebags can vary in quality and functions; you need to know about ease of stowage, secure fastening, zip quality and amount of protection from water and grit.

How?

These seatpacks were judged on how easily they could be fitted; how much in the way of inner tubes, multi-tools and tyre levers they could swallow; ease of access to contents; any movement or rattling when riding; weatherproofing and durability.

HOW WE SCORE

- 10 - Superb, best in its class and we couldn't fault it
- 9 - Excellent, a slight change and it would be perfect
- 8 - Brilliant, we'd happily buy it
- 7 - Solid, but there's better out there
- 6 - Pretty good, but not quite hitting the mark
- 5 - OK, nothing wrong with it, but nothing special
- 4 - A few niggles let this down
- 3 - Disappointing
- 2 - Poor, approach with caution
- 1 - Terrible, do not buy this product

Fizik I.C.S. Saddle Pak £10.99

Just about big enough to fit a spare tube, multi-tool and a very small CO2 inflator, the Fizik is a neat little pack with a hinged back section accessed via a waterproof zip, which allows for easy access to the contents. The version we had in to test is the I.C.S. version (Integrated Clip System) which is designed to work exclusively with Fizik's range of saddles, and clips easily into the slot hidden behind the logo on the saddle's base.

Weight
70
grams

The bag is also available with a traditional strap system for the same price. In both guises the pack fits unobtrusively behind the saddle and once the angle-adjust bolt on the I.C.S. version was tightened there was very little noise. The material the pack is made from is sturdy and waterproof with neat reflective accents; however, the seams are not waterproof so water will get in. The grey colour means that dirt is more obvious. A great-value bag if you just want to carry smaller items, especially if you currently own a Fizik saddle.

8

www.extrauk.co.uk

Topeak Dynawedge Waterproof £24.99

With its futuristic looks, the Dynawedge is the saddlebag Tron would have on his lightcycle. Running with the sci-fi theme, it's also quite Tardis-like in its capability to swallow the essentials and despite the zip mainly opening along the bottom of the bag when on the bike, a neat mesh gusset stops things falling out when you go to access its contents. It can be a little fiddly to extract smaller items but the upside to this is there is no way of it getting in the way when cycling. Securing the bag to your saddle and seatpost is a set of sturdy wing-like straps, so when on the bike there is no movement or noise at all.

The shiny waterproof material and zip ensures that contents stay dry and the sturdy construction means the bag will continue to look good and provide a service for years.

The yellow flashes on the strap and zip might not be to everyone's taste and there are no reflective touches, which would have been nice.

Weight
53
grams

9

www.extrauk.co.uk



Pro Maxi Pro saddlebag £21.99

Shimano's parts and accessory brand have designed a really functional and classic saddlebag. It has a classic wedge shape that fits neatly behind your saddle while maximising its capacity without flaring too wide. The large main compartment is accessed by a wide rear zipped flap that incorporates a mesh divider to carry smaller items. The Maxi Pro easily swallowed my usual kit with space for extras if needed and it also has a narrow neoprene-lined side pocket for putting your pocket money in.

I liked the flash of blue in the lining and the nicely padded construction kept contents quiet. The wide saddle rail straps and seatpost stabilising strap kept the bag clinging like a limpet and was easy to fit and remove. The construction is from a waterproof nylon fabric with reflective accents but was let down by the standard zip and seams that let water in over time. The Maxi Pro is a great for long days out with the ability to carry more contents than most of the other bags on test.

Weight
66
grams

8

www.madison.co.uk

Castelli Undersaddle Mini £26

It's sometimes worrying when a brand branches out into areas outside its expertise but there's no need to worry with the Undersaddle Mini. The lightest bag on test, the Castelli at first glance looks incredibly basic with a plain black exterior with tiny, understated logos and a simple one-strap attachment, but it performs admirably. It's capable of swallowing a spare tube, larger CO2 inflator, spare CO2 cartridge and a comprehensive multi-tool.

A large waterproof zip allows easy access but you might find it easier to take the bag off to help find things quickly. The waterproof material has heat-welded seams on the underside to create a protective environment for the contents, complete with a little mesh divider to stash money or a tool in, along with a slightly padded top section to stop noise when riding. The single, long strap works well to tighten the bag securely to the saddle rails and due to the malleable shape, stay put with limited rattling, and allowed me to strap punctured tubes to the bag.

Weight
38
grams

7

www.saddleback.co.uk

Lezyne M Caddy QR £21

If you are not aware of Lezyne's take on bags they tend to be all about organisation and integration and this one follows suit. The QR in the name applies to the fitting system that consists of a robust clamp that attaches to the back of your saddle rails and holds the bag solidly in place with no rattles or fuss.

Open the wide, drop-down rear of the bag with the easy-to-open waterproof zip and you are treated to several small compartments all easily labelled with what they should contain — obviously the implication is to purchase the Lezyne products that fit perfectly in these slots but other brands also fit. The construction is of durable, waterproof nylon and the rear part is wipe-clean and features a reflective light loop; again seams are not waterproof so keep checking the contents.

A really clever feature is the secure external pocket for your multi-tool — Lezyne has realised that this is the one tool to have quickly to hand. A really well-thought-out bag for neat riders.

Weight
132
grams

9

www.upgradebikes.co.uk



FITNESS

CW essential guide to...

Beetroot

Does beetroot really boost cycling performance? CW investigates

George Winter

We've all heard about the claimed benefits of beetroot, the root vegetable that many believe lends them a competitive edge. But does the research really back up the hype?

Northumbria University's Tom Clifford, PhD candidate and lead author of a recent review of beetroot research told *Cycling Weekly*: "Beetroot juice can reduce the oxygen cost of exercise, probably through its high nitrate content. Drinking a single bottle of beetroot juice can significantly elevate the amount of nitrate in your circulation."

Performance enhancing

Clifford explained that nitrate takes effect when it is converted into nitric oxide. "Nitric oxide," he explained, "is involved in biological processes related to muscle contraction, and increasing its availability in the muscles could be the main mechanism by which nitrate, and therefore beetroot juice, enhances exercise performance."

In a University of Exeter study, club-standard male cyclists drank 500ml of beetroot juice or 500ml of nitrate-depleted beetroot juice, 2.5hr before 4km and 16.1km time trials. Nitrate-containing

beetroot juice improved performances by 2.8 per cent and 2.7 per cent respectively. Co-author Professor Andrew Jones said: "A recommended protocol is to consume beetroot juice each day for three to five days before competition as well as two to three hours before the race."

Recovery promoting

Dr Chris Easton, senior lecturer in exercise and physiology at the University of the West of Scotland, told CW: "Our research has demonstrated that drinking even a small volume of concentrated beetroot juice (70ml) improved cycling performance in a simulated altitude (2,500m)."

Professor Glyn Howatson at Northumbria University explained that evidence is mounting for the use of beetroot in exercise performance. "However," he added, "there are emerging studies with well-trained athletes — rather than recreational athletes with whom most of the positive effects have been demonstrated — that show little effect."

"Nonetheless, beetroot can improve exercise performance through its nitrate content, but importantly it might also help in promoting recovery from strenuous exercise when consumed afterwards — an idea under investigation by Tom Clifford at Northumbria University."

I TRIED IT



Ilkley CC's Chris Kempton, 46, who services and repairs bikes in the NW Leeds area (ckbikes.co.uk) uses beetroot juice in concentrated shot and juice form for cycling, running and

triathlon: "I take beetroot juice for three to four days before an event, and find that it increases the duration for which I can sustain effort."

"In cycling events, I feel I can go faster over long distances, with fatigue

seeming to come more slowly. For shorter events, I'm less convinced of the benefits, but would still use it for an event I was targeting. I find few cyclists experiment with beetroot juice, and I recommend it to others."





PROS AND CONS OF BEETROOT	
Benefits	Possible side-effects
Helps improve exercise performance	The relatively high sugar content may cause increased blood sugar concentrations in diabetics
Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and cardio-protective properties	The relatively high oxalate content may increase the risk of kidney stones developing in those who are prone to the condition
Stimulates blood-flow in the brain, which helps improve cognition	Red-coloured urine
It is advisable to avoid consuming beetroot juice every day; it is better to consume a diverse array of fruit and vegetables to minimise the risk of possible side-effects developing.	

Great for...
pre-ride fuelling

Sweet chilli infused beetroot & chicken wraps

Time taken:
10 mins

This quick and easy recipe is perfect for those looking to get a quick carbohydrate boost

METHOD:

- 1) Tear the chicken into pieces.
- 2) Slice the beetroot, avocado and red onion.
- 3) Put all the ingredients including the lettuce, coriander and sweet chilli sauce into separate bowls.
- 4) Warm the wraps as per the pack instructions and serve portions accordingly.

INGREDIENTS:

- 150g cooked chicken
- 180g sweet chilli infused beetroot
- ½ avocado
- ¼ red onion, finely sliced
- 4 wholemeal wraps
- Handful lamb's lettuce
- Small bunch coriander leaves
- Sweet chilli sauce to taste

NUTRITION PER SERVING:

323	34.5g	15g	8.7g
calories	carbohydrates	protein	fat

Jensie's life lessons in fitness

Legendarily tough rider Jens Voigt shares 33 years' worth of cycling wisdom: a shortcut-free masterclass in hard training



Endurance alone isn't enough

"In the early days, in East Germany, most of my training was long and slow. I could ride Paris-Moscow at 41.5kph, but when I turned professional I realised that races aren't decided at that speed; they are decided in the crucial five or 10 minutes of max effort — when I needed to be stronger."

Train specifically for the hardest parts of the race

"I cut down the volume of training and did more quality, less quantity. I already had endurance; I didn't need any more. What I needed was to train for the crucial part of the race. I did 10 minutes and one kilometre maximal efforts to replicate jumping after a breakaway or trying to create a break. I'd ride five times a four- or five-minute circuit early in the season — then later 10 times — at close to my maximum effort."

Training hard isn't enough — you need a winning edge

"When I started training with Bjarne Riis at CSC, he said, 'Look, it's easy to train hard, the tricky part is to train hard in the right way.' Earlier in my career, when I never thought the [Berlin] Wall would open, I never thought I'd be responsible for my own training — I'd always had coaches in East Germany. In my early days as a pro, it was all about quality and intervals — any hard training was good training. Then I started to work with Bjarne, who said that we need to train hard and smart because everyone has good bikes, good equipment and can train hard — we need to have a winning edge."

Focus on the intervals, not the in-between

"In the first training camp, you'd do 10-minute medium intervals. Later in the season, you'd do a 20-minute medium warm-up before the proper intervals. Between the intervals, training was just transport from A to B, to the next set of intervals. Training was achieved in the intervals, not in between. Bjarne would say, 'Go slower, boys, recover, you need to be fresh for the intervals because they're going to be pretty hard.'"

Sit and stand maintaining the same power

"One thing I hated was sitting-standing. You'd decide on a climb long enough to let you do one minute sitting down and one minute standing, two minutes sitting, two minutes standing, three minutes sitting, three minutes standing, then two minutes and one minute again. You'd do that for 30 minutes. And to make it more difficult, you were supposed to hold 85-95rpm uphill, so your heart rate just goes skyrocketing when you are out of the saddle. Plus, we had to push constant watts whether sitting or standing. I had to push around 400-420 watts, I think, a little less at the start of the year and a little more after. That was what helped my body keep that freshness, especially when I was getting older."

Go mountain biking with riders who are faster than you

"To keep that maximum punch [as I grew older], to keep my high heart right in time trials and all of that, I needed to train differently. For example, in the last five years of my career, all winter long, I did mountain biking because it's harder work. OK, in the last years, that didn't work. At 41 or 42, my body just wouldn't respond any more the way I desired. But from 36-40, I remember I trained with an ambitious group of weekend warriors, amateurs, juniors who did cyclo-cross. I'd follow them on my mountain bike. When I started with them, they'd be in the middle of their 'cross season and they kicked my ass. A month later, I could easily stay with them. By the spring, I'd be doing two and a half hours with them, then they'd all go back home, and I'd do the same loop the other way around to go home — twice as much as them."

Do the real work in the winter

"I trained hard in the winter because I remember one of the coaches in East Germany telling me that the real cyclist is made in the winter, which still holds true. The real work is done in the winter. If you come out short of form at the end of January, you are pretty much f***ed. You'll be in shape another two months after the peloton. Fortunately, not everyone listened to that advice or they'd get lazy and have a huge



If it feels hard, it is good for you

"The first thing you lose as you get older is that sharp edge, the high heart rate, the punch out of the corners. That little bit of aggressively, fast-twitching muscle fibre... that probably goes first. You still have a lot of endurance and stamina, but those maximal things start to go. If you want to keep it, you have to train it. In cycling, whatever is uncomfortable and hard for you is probably good for you. There are not many tricks and techniques. In cycling, you just need a big heart, a big pair of lungs and legs."

Christmas turkey. OK, I had that as well, but I went training. That was my advantage and that's why I had a lot of early-season results in my best years with Bjarne — because I was ready, I came out of the winter ready to race."

Make a deal with yourself

"Until the last year of my career, I always had positive feedback from

my training or results. I trained hard, I'd come out of the winter, maybe win a stage in Paris-Nice or Tour of the Med, or maybe top five somewhere. I'd say it was worth the work. Until the last year, when I found it mentally really hard to go out training... I remember saying, 'You know, Jens, just be honest: you don't want to go any more.' I had a crisis meeting with myself. I said, 'All we want to do is finish the season in a good manner, honour the contract.' I looked at myself and said, 'Let's keep it together for one more season.' I squeezed it all out of me."

Think yourself lucky, and count your blessings

"Until that last year, I loved training. I'm always the guy with the glass half full, looking at the positive side. My office job was being in the fresh air, hearing the birds singing, riding and keeping myself fit. That's a great job! I was lucky in life. Life was good to me, giving me a chance to discover cycling and make it my life. For 95 per cent of my career, I never had a problem with training and motivation."

Training for the Hour really hurts

"The Hour record helped me [maintain motivation]. I knew it was just one month to go. I loved every little bit of the intervals. I thought, 'This is the last time I have to do this.' I didn't have to train with endurance any more — just hard and vicious. I remember the hardest one was six times eight minutes at the race speed we planned, plus five per cent, so basically six times eight minutes in the red. We planned for 51km, plus five per cent, so my heart rate was just immediately through the limit after the first one. I was basically in the foetal position, saying, 'Mamma, I don't want to do this anymore. I want to abandon this project!' So that was hard."

Sometimes you just need to rest

"The biggest training mistake I made was not taking enough rest. Sometimes you have to be brave and just give your body a rest. If your body is yelling and screaming at you, sometimes it's not laziness, it's just that your body really needs your help. Sometimes you have to be brave and say, 'The work is done, I just need the shape to come.' Chris Boardman would tell me, 'You know what, Jens, in the last week before the

Tour de France, you can't improve your shape, but you can very well run yourself into the ground by training too much.' That's so true."

Keep healthy post-retirement

"I still ride because, in my job for Trek, they make me ride. They signed me up for the Ride Across Wisconsin, which is 175 miles — not kilometres, miles! I have to maintain a little bit of fitness because riding my bike is still a big part of my job. Even more important for me as a father of six children, I cannot afford to have a heart attack in two years because I didn't train... I still ride and run; more running now."

Following doctor's orders isn't always possible

"I asked the team doctor in the Tour last year how much cycling I should do after I retire. He said, 'The way you have done cycling at the highest level for 33 years, you should do 60 per cent of the quality and quantity of the last year's training.' Suddenly Mikel [Zabala, physiologist] was laughing his head off, saying, 'You want to stop, but 60 per cent is basically like you are just cutting out the racing from your life and still training as normal.' That would mean that I would have had to have ridden 20,000km this year. There was no way in hell I was going to do that."

Newcomers need to be honest with themselves

"What I see again and again is that you should know your limits, pace yourself. I see it all the time: newcomers or beginners want too much, too soon and then they burn their matches too soon because they become frustrated that they have sore muscles, a sore knee or sore butt. First, be honest to yourself."

You need to make a plan

"Know where you want to go and what you want to train for. If you want to train for the Masters World Championships in Maastricht, then yes, you're going to need to train a lot, but if you just want to keep a reasonably fit body, you don't need to train five hours five times a week. So have a plan and be honest with yourself. Look at where you've come from and where you are currently. Have a plan and be realistic with yourself, and pace yourself."

Don't take on too much

"Whether you are married or not, with or without children, how much time do you have to spare? And what are your goals? Do you want to drop five kilos? Do you want to become lean? Do you want to win the British National Championship? Have an idea where you want to go, look at yourself and see if you can. Are you at zero or, if you trained before, do you just need to freshen up? Out of those pieces of the puzzle, you can create a picture that fits for you. It helps to train with groups to get motivation and have support. Be ambitious, but also be honest with yourself. Take a rest too. I'll tell anyone who'll listen that having three good days of training and one day off is better than just pushing on and on."

It's all down to you — you're on your own

"In cycling, there are no shortcuts. If you want to achieve something you have to do the hours on the bike. In soccer, if you are tired, you can stand on the field and team-mates can run for you and cover your ass. In cycling, no one will cover your ass. If you're dropped, you're dropped. Whatever you want to achieve, you have to do the training for it." ■

Jens Voigt: 30 years of hard work and rewards

1971: Born in Grevesmühlen, East Germany.

1985: Joins national sports school.

1994: Wins Peace Race.

1997: Turns pro with ZVVZ-Giant-Australian Institute of Sport.

1998: Joins GAN.

1999: Wins Critérium International (the first of five times).

2001: Wins Grand Prix des Nations; wears yellow in Tour and wins a stage.

2004: Joins CSC.

2006: Wins second Tour stage.

2008: Wins Giro stage.

2011: Joins Leopard-Trek.

July 2014: Takes part in his 17th Tour de France.

September 2014: Sets new World Hour record, aged 43 (51.110km).

December 2014: Becomes coach with Trek Factory Racing, having retired from pro cycling.



Don't worry too much about data

"Not at all. I only did it because I was told to do it. If you want to talk about training science, I'm the worst person to ask. Chris Boardman or Bobby Julich, they watched it all; they still have all their files from every race... I'm not like that. Of course, I have some basic knowledge to get me going, but one reason it was good I retired is because I'm a dinosaur and I'm about to be extinct! I went by instinct for a big part of my career. If the sun was shining and the sky was blue, I'd attack. I didn't have a plan, I just decided right in the moment."

Helen Wyman

My week in training

Date: December 21-27, 2015 | **Location:** Oudenaarde, Belgium
Preparing for: UCI World Cup, rounds 5 & 6, December 26-27

Chris Marshall-Bell

Helen Wyman is a British cyclo-cross great. The 34-year-old has been national champion nine times in 11 years, twice-European champion, and is a perennial figure in the top 10 of UCI World Cup races.

Wyman raced five times in eight days during the 2015 festive period, and here she talks us through her week leading up to the hectic schedule: "This week, because of the races the following week, I had to make sure that though the training hours weren't high, I was still training as good as I could be."

M **Rest day**
 I raced at the weekend so I had a day off the bike. I went for my weekly Monday massage and I did core stability with a programme called YogaGlo, a website with over 10,000 sessions. It was upper-body focused, with handstands, half-press-ups and loads of planks. They have stretch exercises so even after a heavy day I always do something. I do core exercises three times a week.

45min

T **Motor-pacing hill training, gym work**
 We did a hilly ride near to where I live. We then went out to Flanders and did four hills, although we didn't do any cobbles. When we went up the hills, we did spinning and full four-minute hill efforts. Every Tuesday, I go to the gym and train on the upper body weight machines for 45 minutes.

2hr 45

W **2hr group ride, 3hr ride with 30sec intervals**
 At 9am I joined the canal group ride with 70 other riders, including old Belgian guys and professionals from Etixx-Quick Step and Orica-GreenEdge. Belgian national women's road race champion Jolien d'Hooere came along too. It's two hours — we ride up and down for 25km to Ghent and back. In the summer it's crazy fast and we ride until there's no one left. In the afternoon, I did 30-second intervals repeatedly during a three-hour ride.

5hr

T **Easy day with a short turbo session**
 It was an easy day as I was preparing for Saturday's race. It was raining so I went on the turbo-trainer for an hour to keep the legs fresh and spinning. I never do anything too strenuous so close to a race. I did a core session on YogaGlo in the afternoon.

1hr 45

F **Course recce and gentle ride**
 Christmas is just another day. Steph [Wyman's husband] makes us Christmas dinner, but before or after Christmas itself. We don't have time to celebrate because there's so much racing on. We opened our Christmas presents in the morning before driving down to Zolder so that I could pre-ride the course. I checked it out, did a lap with Hannah Payton and Amira Mellor and then I did a few hot laps, attacking certain parts. I then rode to where we were staying.

2hr 15

S **Race day: World Cup, round five**
 The pre-ride times are quite short, so I did two laps before the junior race, to make sure nothing had changed, plus one more lap. My warm-up is 30 minutes, very specific to me, and it is progressing my heart rate without progressing my power too much, interspersed with an effort. I wasn't pleased with my performance in the race: 12th was a disappointment. I had a 25-minute cool-down because I was racing the next day.

1hr 40

S **Race day: Hansgrohe Supergrohe, Diegem, round six**
 I put in a brilliant performance compared to Saturday, and I should have got second, but I came fourth by a bike-length. There was a crazy false start: the lights on the left turned green, but the lights on the right, where I was, were still red. Half the field was 100 metres ahead before they called them back.

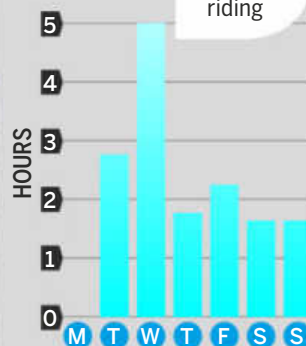
1hr 40

WE SAY

It is fascinating to see how a top-flight pro like Wyman trains in the week leading up to an important race weekend, with another important race just around the corner. Notably, the volume and intensity remain relatively high until two days before Saturday's race. Even on the day before (Friday), she includes some short bouts of high-intensity work while previewing the course. This is an established principle of tapering: less overall volume but without neglecting to include some short, sharp efforts.

The week statistics

14
hours riding



Wyman in her mud bespattered element

Training Q&A

What is the best piece of training advice you have ever been given?

That you never stop learning. A lot of people give useful information and if you think that you're always doing everything right, then you're never going to get better.

How do you stay motivated?

To keep motivated, if something isn't working you shouldn't just keep doing the same thing but look at what isn't working and see how to improve it. You need to be adaptable. This season, we've mixed things up — using people for different things. We've worked out where I'm lacking and are fixing things.

Aside from Steph and Mark Walker, I also have James Spragg coaching me this year. Mark's scientific knowledge is incredible and Steph coaches me on a day-to-day basis but you can always learn. It's good to bounce ideas off other people.

What's the biggest training mistake you have ever made?

Training while sick. I know in my heart when I am sick, but in the past I've gone out, trained and got sick. Just take one day off; it's better than having to take five days off. You're not being lazy. I got severe bronchitis in February last year because I was holding on to race and ignoring the fact it was bad. I had to have a chest x-ray because

they thought I had pneumonia. It's really important to listen to your body.

What's your advice for aspiring racers?

Go out, listen to what the people around you are saying, and take good advice. Filter out the rest. Give it a go; if you believe you can be the next world champion, don't ever give up on your dreams.

Bio Helen Wyman

- Age: 34
- Lives: Oudenaarde
- Rides for: Kona Factory Team,
- Discipline: Cyclo-cross
- Best results: British CX champion x9; European CX Champion x2; Superprestige round wins x3; Koppenbergcross x3



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CW
Difficulty
rating:
6/10

**This
year's
event:
March 6**

Polocini Winter Sprinter

62
miles

679
metres
ascent

A flat ride through rural Cheshire seasoned with a sprinkling of cobbles

The cobbled Classics are arguably the most action-packed and exciting races to watch. Seeing the pros battle over this gruelling terrain has brought us to both fear and revere the *pavé*.

If you're well versed on these tough sections of road you know

how it feels. Your brain shaking around in your skull, teeth rattling, the never-ending vibration through your hands all quickly melts away when you finish your ride feeling like a legend. And as Allen Bridge, owner of Polocini said: "It's not a Winter Sprinter without some cobbles."

Where is it?

The ride heads out from Woodford, Cheshire, situated just 11 miles south of Manchester and close to the city's airport. It is easily accessed from the M56 and M60 motorways. The ride takes in the Cheshire Plains and dips momentarily into the northern edge of the Peak District.

Why ride it?

This mostly flat route will be just what the doctor ordered to get your mojo back after the winter and prepare the legs for the spring riding that is just around the corner. With a small section of *pavé* to tackle, it's the perfect opportunity to give those cobbles a go.

History

Polocini has many strings to its bow: European cycling tours, sportive weekends, multi-day events and training camps, a lot of which head to the cobbles of Belgium. Its Winter Sprinter event is now in its sixth year and is the season opener.

How to enter

With only 300 places available you need to sign up via the website www.polocini.com. Entry is £25. There are no entries on the day.

HQ details

The Woodford Centre is situated on Chester Rd, Woodford and is accessible from the A34 via the M60 or the A523. There is parking on site.

Where to stay

There's a Premier Inn at Handforth four miles from the start. If you want to be closer try the Deanwater Hotel, just down the road from the start line. For a B&B try Goose Green Farm just outside Alderley Edge. If you fancy a stay in the Peak District National Park, check out Harrop Fold Farm, nine miles from the start.

Where to eat

Both the Davenport Arms and Oliver's Bistro are within a mile of the start line and use locally sourced ingredients. The Coach and Four is over in Wilmslow. In Knutsford, the Courtyard Coffee House is also a Penny Farthing museum and well worth checking out. It's open until 4pm.

Local bike shop

Pay a visit to Bikes 'n' Gear on Knutsford High Street.

Stately homes abound in this part of Cheshire



And so with that we were off, delving into the Cheshire Plains. For the most part, the Winter Sprinter is, as the name suggests, quick and flat. One minute you'll find yourself plunging down lanes — by barren fields flushed with Cheshire new potatoes — the next you're whizzing past homes that wouldn't look out of place on *Grand Designs*, with perfectly trimmed hedges and expertly manicured lawns.

The first few miles of the Sprinter are a nice gentle pull along Knutsford Road towards Mobberley, where the road is lined with Victorian-style street lamps. Having swung north, at the village of Bucklow we find ourselves leaving wide, sweeping roads behind us and plunging into a narrow tree-lined stretch. Mud and leaves can build up here, so take care.

There finally comes an opportunity to warm up those climbing muscles with a short incline over Bucklow Hill. As the Cheshire Plains glide past, I realise we are fast approaching the day's cobbled test.

Alderley Edge may be home to a millionaire football set, but it's also home to an archaic road. As you skirt by the village's beautiful yellow sandstone church, find a gear that will work for you on the pretty little lane of Woodbrook Road; it rears up just around the next corner to a gradient of around 10 per cent.

If you've not ridden cobbles before, they are not as straightforward as you might think. "Hold the tops, it'll give you more control," advises Bridge. "And try to relax — gently guide the bike, let it coast over the cobbles."

This is easier said than done when it feels like your teeth are going to fall out of your head, but it works and we bounce gloriously to the top.

The climbing continues but now back on nice smooth tarmac as we head over the escarpment of Alderley Edge and the climb that is known as Wizard Hill.

A quick loop on the southernmost part of the route affords our legs a rest before we delve into the Peak District. The rolling hills and low stone walls are a stark contrast to the rest of the ride.

We climb up to Pott Shrigley and traverse along the edge of the National Park, checking our speed as we begin to drop down — there is a narrow tunnel as we pass under the Macclesfield Canal so we err on the side of caution.

The final few miles are certainly the hilliest but not so severe that they hold us back. On the home stretch, dropping back into Wilmslow, we're soon sprinting once more.

On event day there will be a warm lunch, as well as breakfast before the ride. The advice from Bridge is: "Turn up hungry and bring your good legs."

TARGET TIMES			
Route	Distance	Ave speed	Time
Short	31 miles	10mph	3hr 6min
Short	31 miles	14mph	2hr 13min
Short	31 miles	17mph	1hr 49min
Long	62 miles	10mph	6hr 12min
Long	62 miles	14mph	4hr 26min
Long	62 miles	17mph	3hr 39min

The challenges

1 Wizard Hill (B5087)

You hit this climb halfway up, straight after Woodbrook Road. Unfortunately the top is the steepest section, fluctuating between 10 and 14 per cent.

2 Birtles Lane

The southernmost loop that drops from Over Alderley has a nice little bite before the right turn to Prestbury. The climb sits at six to eight per cent for around 1.5 miles so get comfy in the saddle and settle into a rhythm.

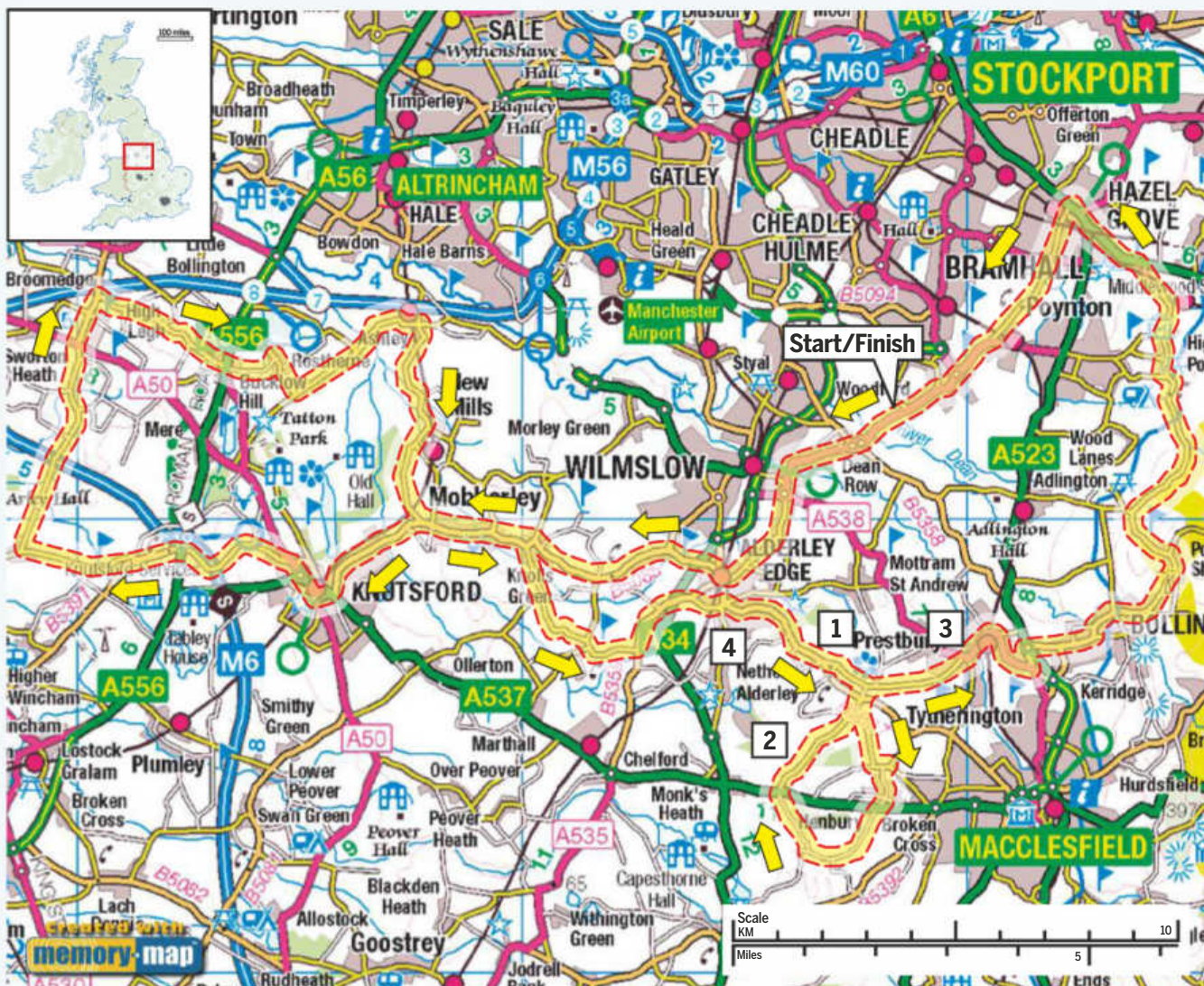
3 New End to Prestbury Lane

With an average of five per cent this is a nice long pull that edges you ever closer to the Peak District National Park. It starts just after the village of Prestbury and ends after crossing the train lines.

NAIL IT

4 Woodbrook Road

This quaint cobbled lane averages 10 per cent but it's only 0.4 miles long. If you've a chance of making it to the top you need to give yourself space. Split-second decisions are difficult and if someone puts a foot down you want to have the opportunity to get around them. If you do find yourself in a group of riders you'll do well to hold back to give yourself the best line of sight. Riding a slightly bigger gear than normal also helps. Let your front wheel coast over the cobbles and fight the urge to grip the handlebars.



Event website and GPX files... www.polocini.com/pages/winter-sprinter-sunday-8th-march-2015

Manchester Wheelers

We go for a spin with one of Britain's most illustrious clubs

As views go, this definitely ticks the box marked 'spectacular'. It's 360 degrees of uninterrupted rolling Peak District hills and is being soaked up by 24 riders from one of the oldest and most famous clubs in the country. It's a momentary pause in order to regroup at the top of Brickworks, a 1.6-mile climb 16 miles into Manchester Wheelers' club run.

It's a classic route for the club, and it's hard to believe we've found such a remote place only 20 miles from the city of Manchester. "I need to pace myself better up

Brickworks," says Catherine Ferguson. "I've moved down from Yorkshire and since I started riding the track, I've forgotten how to climb."

But it's clear she's no slouch, and with the track league kicking off in early January, many of the riders out on this late-December ride have been gearing up for winter velodrome racing and are out to test their form on the climbs.

It's the only point where the well-drilled unit breaks form: the rest of the ride is carried out in a two-up formation with run leaders Holly Carter at the front and Dan

Robinson at the back keeping the group together.

"We're normally pretty chirpy," says Carter, who's also the club social secretary. "But we're a bit subdued from Scott Burns's Masters Hour record attempt at the track last night. He missed it by 150 metres — it was so close". The record attempt gives an inkling as to the calibre of rider that passes through Manchester Wheelers' door.

"Of course our most famous riders were Chris Boardman and Reg Harris," says Ian Haywood. "We haven't quite got that level of athlete nowadays, but we've got some younger riders in their early-20s who turn up and want to be the next Chris Froome. They're so fit already

Club facts

Based: Manchester

Members: 400+

Formed: 1883

Meets: Gateway Hotel, East Didsbury, Manchester and Coffee Fix, Gatley, Cheadle

and well educated, but we have to explain to them that it doesn't happen overnight. We take them out and teach them how to ride and how to race".

The club is a mix of old and new riders, with a combination of traditional club runs throughout the year, and lots of interval and skill sessions. "With anyone being able to get a race licence, it's important to ensure a standard of riding is set."

In that regard, it's almost as if Manchester Wheelers act as custodians of the road. "I lead an introduction to road riding on the first Sunday of every month," Chris Wilkinson tells me. "We don't expect riders to become members, but it's introducing them to the

History

Formed over 130 years ago, the club is steeped in history. Originally named Manchester Athletic Bicycle Club, their race history starts in 1885 with 24-hour events. In 1889 the club was renamed Manchester Wheelers after becoming confused with Manchester Athletic Club.

Originally the club donned black and white kit, but in 1947 Reg Harris proposed the post-war patriotic red, white and blue jersey that we see the club in today. After a period in the doldrums during the 60s and 70s, the club's fortunes were revived in 1980 when club sponsorship replaced donations and subscriptions.

With the aim of helping riders to get to races and allowing them to put in more training hours, the

funding programme attracted the country's best riders and naturally catapulted Manchester Wheelers to the top of the domestic racing scene.

The sponsorship deals were, however, controversial and some say responsible for the near death of the professional sport in the UK by paying riders to stay amateur.

Past champions

With Reg Harris a household name in the 1950s, many assume he was the first world champion to come from the ranks of Manchester Wheelers. However, it was actually J.S. Benyon, who won the Amateur Sprint Championship at the Velodrome de Zurenborg in Antwerp, Belgium in 1904.

It was 43 years later in 1947 that Reg Harris won the same

title, before going on to turn professional and winning four Sprint World Championship titles. This is long before a chap called Chris Boardman arrived on the scene and gained several national titles wearing the classic Manchester Wheelers colours, before of course becoming world and Olympic champion and Tour de France yellow jersey wearer.

Other famous Wheelers include Alan Bannister, Cyril Cartwright, Malcolm Elliott, Dave Lloyd and Emma Davis.

Achievements

- Tandem record holders Schafer and Cunliffe rode 100 miles in 4:49.2 in 1899, a record that remained unbeaten when the ruling body declared paced records obsolete in 1930.
- J.S. Benyon was the first

- member to become a national champion in 1904 for the Quarter-Mile National Cycling Union Track Championship.
- The Manchester Wheelers' race meets that were held at the Fallowfield track until it closed in 1975, attracted world-class riders.
- Kiera Byland won three gold medals at the 2015 Los Angeles Special Olympics.





Manchester Wheelers

Ride highlights

1 Beeston Brow

A steep, technical, cobbled climb that is guaranteed to make your legs scream.

2 Brick Hill

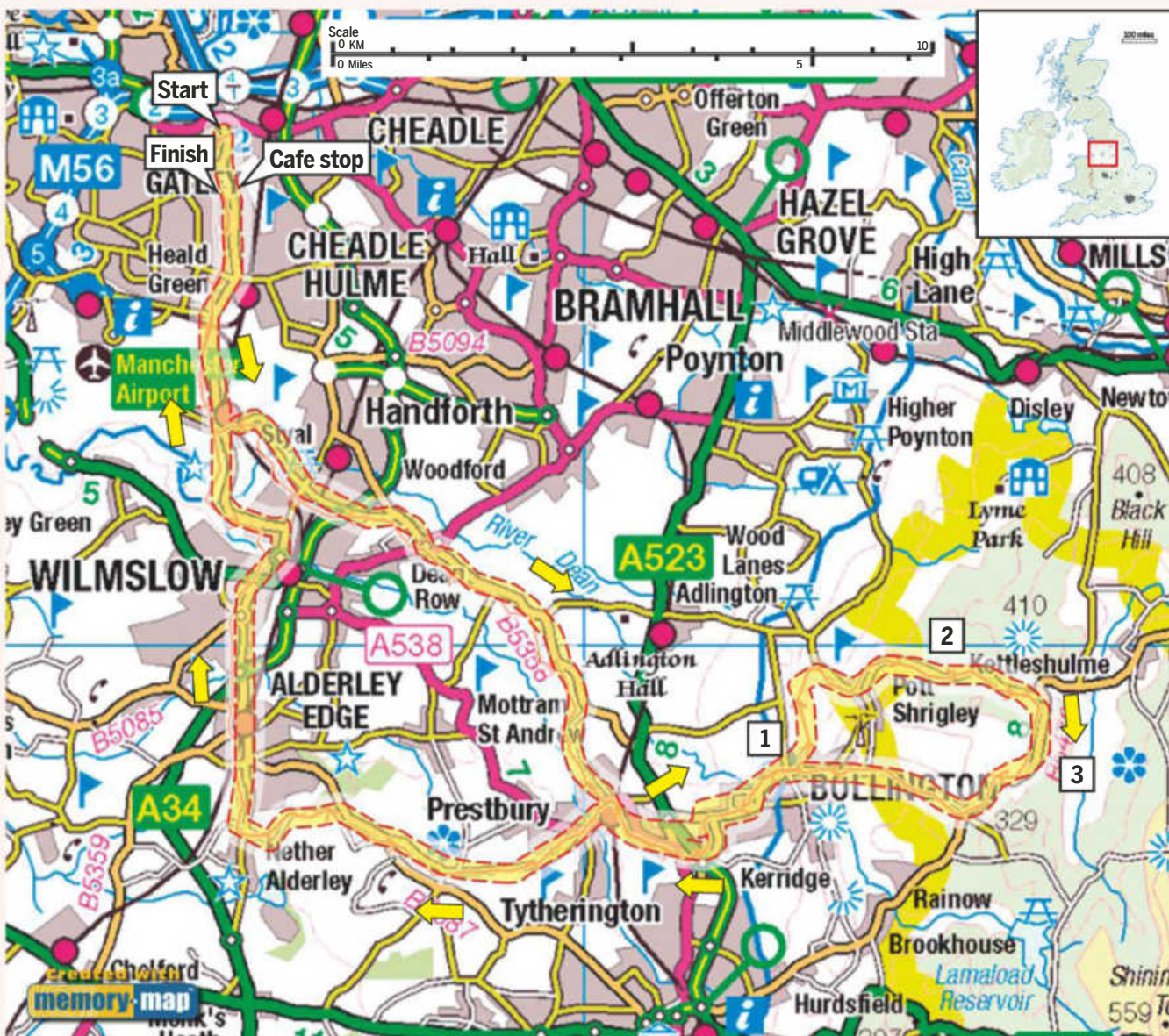
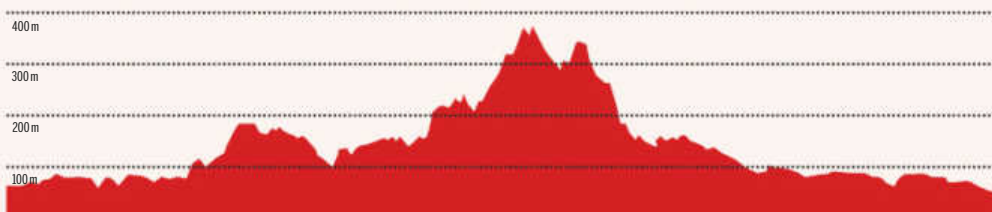
A long climb, but with 360-degree views of the Peak District from the top, it's oh-so worth it.

3 Blaze Hill

A 2.7km swooping descent. It's steep at the top, but plenty wide and long enough to relax and enjoy after all the climbing.

Favourite cafe

Located within easy access of both the lanes of Cheshire and the Peaks, Coffee Fix is a cycling hub that even has a locked garage available for your bike. The barista-served coffee is outstanding — not surprising given that the cafe has won awards for it. Open from 10am till 4pm, the broad menu offers breakfast, lunch and dinners, along with a wealth of cake. With a love of all things cycling, the cafe even has its own Coffee Fix kit to purchase. Coffee Fix, 80 Church Road, Gatley, Cheadle, SK8 4NQ.





One for all: club unity is paramount

Meet the club



Catherine Ferguson: "I got my track accreditation in November. I can't wait for track league to start. It's like a whole new cycling world!"



Nick Lines: "My first ride was faster than I expected and I got dropped. A member dropped back and paced me back in."



The famous club kit can be accessorised...



Coffee fix: the cafe, the experience



Holly Carter: "Monday night is club night. Because it's hard to get such a big club together, we try to put on lots of social events."



Jason Dobson: "I joined seven years ago. It's been a steep learning curve, but I now race road and crits."

etiquette of the road, how to ride in a group and what level of fitness they should aim for.

Chain-gang discipline

"We have a section on the website about kit and equipment, but we still have the odd rider turning up on unroadworthy bikes and we refuse to take them out. We're the Manchester Wheelers — we have standards." This attitude is not about elitism but is rather about rider safety.

The riding level was impeccable. The entire club

waits (off the road) for one puncture to be fixed, ensuring that the group sticks together and that everyone is present and correct before setting off again. "We've got a lot of abilities in the club, so we have rides for every level of ability," says Robinson. "But club run rules are that no one gets left behind."

And with that we're now within striking distance of home. One final mechanical means a group decision for splitting up, with most continuing on to the cafe,

while a few wait behind to ensure the rider is OK, allowing for a speedy chaingang-style canter back to join the others for cake and coffee. With a pile of bikes outside, the steamy cafe is packed with riders chewing the fat about the ride and, of course, still dissecting last night's record attempt. "He'll be at it again before too long," smiles Holly. Perhaps she's letting on more than she's saying, or perhaps she just knows how tenacious the Manchester Wheelers are. ■

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Toys Hill

Four Elms, Kent

Simon Warren

I've felt my fair share of pain on Toys Hill, usually at the end of early-season reliability trials. After a hard, often cold and wet slog round the Kent lanes, we always knew Toys was waiting for us to show who'd been training and who'd been bluffing.

There are two ways to start the climb, both leaving the B2042 just north of Four Elms, and the hard work begins at the point where they converge. It's actually not that hard right away; the tough stuff lies at the top.

CW
Difficulty
rating:
7/10

If you get to the midway point in good shape then you may fare well on the last drag; if you're already hurting, well it's going to be torture.

Passing the small village green, the slope immediately ramps up to 18 per cent and stays there. Climbing this on your best bike on a

balmy July evening is

tough, never mind on the winter tank in early February. Many an ego has been shattered on these final nasty

500 metres of tarmac and, worse, many have had to unclip and make the walk of shame until the slope begins to abate.

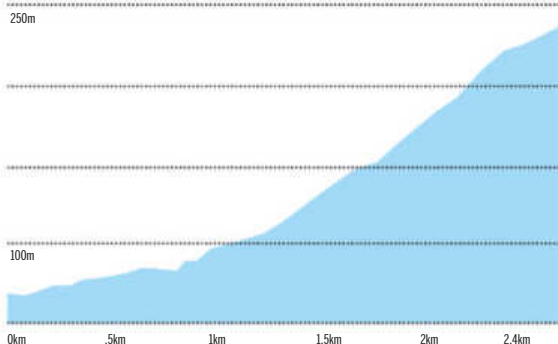
The stats

WHERE The climb starts just north of Four Elms where Toys Hill leaves the B2042 and heads up the ridge.

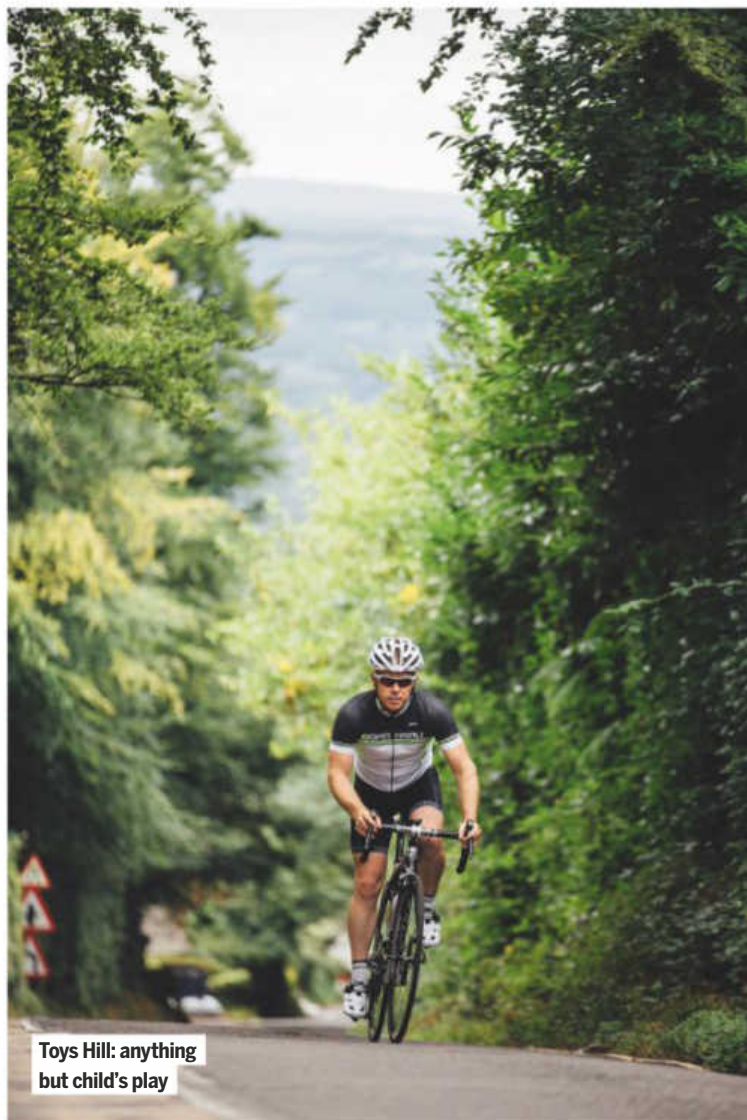


KOM Top Tip Don't touch your smallest sprocket until you reach the village green in Toys Hill.

2.7km	235m	170m	6%	18%
Length	Summit height	Height gain	Average gradient	Max gradient

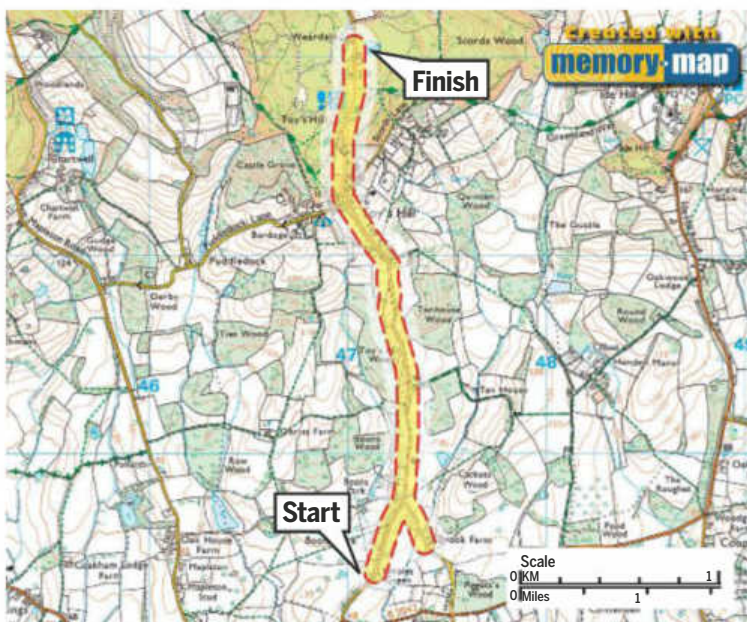


Strava file: www.strava.com/segments/6691062



Toys Hill: anything but child's play

Photo: Chris Catchpole



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The Official Review £20.00



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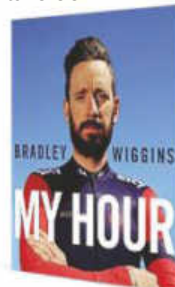
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Cyclepedia

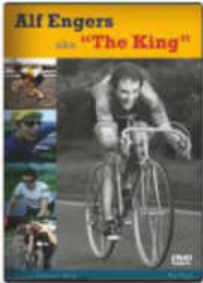
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A psychological and dramatic study of the battle between some of the greatest legends of the sport. Eddy Merckx, Roger De Vlaeminck, Freddy Maertens and Francesco Moser all participated in the 1976 Paris-Roubaix, but the star of the film is the race itself.

Battle of the Bikes/ On Yer Bike

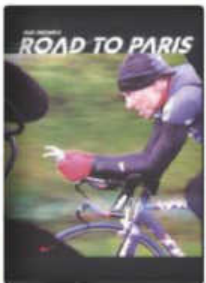
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Battle of the Bikes
examines Graeme Obree, who built his own bike out of washing machine parts and rode it in his own unique crouched position to become the World Hour Record holder. **On Yer Bike** is an intimate portrait of Obree from an amateur cyclist to World Hour Record holder.

Road To Paris

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Documentary that covers Lance Armstrong and the 2001 US Postal Service Team over the course of 27 days in April as they prepare to win a third consecutive TDF. Neverbeforeseen footage takes you inside team meetings and in the team car during cycling's greatest races, including down to- the wire Amstel Gold and the hellish Paris-Roubaix.

Racing Is My Life

£18.99



The Beryl Burton story 'Racing is Life... anything else before or after is just waiting', Steve McQueen from the film 'Le Mans'. A quote that sums up Beryl Burton, the Yorkshire housewife, who despite a severe illness in childhood, became a cycling phenomenon, the most successful British female cyclist ever.

Stars and Watercarriers/ The Impossible Hour

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Stars & Watercarriers:
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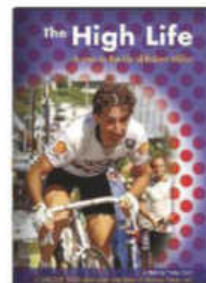


In 2003, acclaimed film director, Pepe Danquart, documented the highs and lows experienced by the Deutsche Telekom team during the Tour de France... *German with English subtitles*

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Chasing Legends

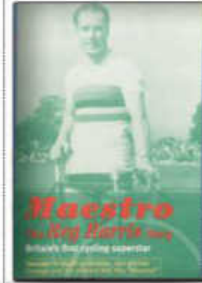
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£19.99



The story of Britain's first cycling superstar. Five times World Sprint Champion and the winner of two silver medals in the 1948 Olympics. Enjoy the film of his amazing life, with numerous interviews and previously unreleased archive film, including the BBC film 'Maestro' seen here for the very first time. Includes: 15 minutes of Bonus Features

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Home hero aces Aussie opener



Caleb Ewan nails the bunch sprint in exciting TDU prelude

Words: Nick Bull Photo: Yuzuru Sunada

The Tour Down Under's prelude criterium is not always the best barometer of how riders will fare across the rest of the season (just ask last year's winner Marcel Kittel), but it gave Caleb Ewan the first sprint bragging rights of 2016 on Sunday night.

Already considered one of Orica-GreenEdge's brightest stars, the 21-year-old took advantage of a good lead-out from team-mate Daryl Impey to beat Trek's Giacomo Nizzolo and British duo Adam Blythe (Tinkoff) and Ben Swift (Sky) to the line on the 1.7-kilometre circuit around Adelaide's Rymill Park.

"I felt really good coming into this race," said the pre-race favourite. "I'm really relieved that I won today and it

gives me a whole lot of confidence going into the next races as well."

Ewan has already won the Australian Circuit Race Championships and Bay Crit series this month, and without a headline sprinter competing on Sunday, was rightfully billed as the favourite for the event.

He beat Nizzolo by more than a bike length, while the Italian also had a decent gap on third-placed Blythe. "I did feel pretty confident. I didn't see [the] Trek [lead-out] come until the last two hundred metres," Ewan added.

"My biggest concern at the time was [IAM's Matteo] Pelucchi, because he had a pretty strong lead-out in the end, but [then] I could see him really dying on the wheel."

Clearly in excellent condition, Ewan's first post-Down Under challenge is likely to be that of maintaining some form for the rest of the racing season.

A Giro d'Italia debut in May is on his schedule, and Orica will be hopeful that having given him a split northern-southern hemisphere programme to ease him into pro racing in 2015, his increased European focus this year will see him add to his two victories taken on these shores last season.

Getting over Down Under

Starting the season so well does come with warnings, however. "I'm happy not to go [to Australia]," said André Greipel, the Tour Down Under's most decorated stage winner, last month. "Even if you don't recognise it [jet leg and fatigue] too much, you lose 10 days [recovering] when you could be doing good training."

Bora-Argon 18's Australian rider Zak Dempster told *Cycling Weekly* last week: "You've got to pick and choose your months [to go well in], there's only a certain amount of energy you can spend in a season. If you want to be competitive [at Down Under], you have to be in good shape — there's not much point being there otherwise."

Meanwhile, Blythe has found renewed motivation at new team Tinkoff after a season assisting Ewan at Orica-GreenEdge.

The 26-year-old was keen to start racing under the tutelage of sports director Sean Yates in Australia, and his team's aggressive tactics paid dividends with a minor place in the criterium.

Seemingly motivated about his likely role of supporting world champion Peter Sagan through the Spring Classics, Blythe said: "I'm really excited, it's hopefully going to be a good year."

**Additional reporting by Sophie Smith*

Santos Women's Tour gets thumbs-up from King

Sophie Smith in Adelaide

Olympic team pursuit gold medallist Dani King did not echo the sentiments of fellow Brit Lizzie Armitstead when she fronted for a 20.4-kilometre criterium that was part of the Santos Women's Tour last week.

Armitstead made headlines in 2015 when she refused to compete at the Tour de Yorkshire, classifying a 60-kilometre race as too short.

One could only imagine the world champion's reaction to the second stage of the Women's Tour in Adelaide, which even some commentators deemed a joke.

However, King had a different take on the short stage, which was won by her Wiggle-High5 team-mate Annette Edmondson.

"We averaged 44kph," King said. "It shows the standard and the speed in women's racing now."

"It's hard to criticise as women's cycling is going in the right direction, but obviously it

would be nice to have a bit of a longer race."

Having started life as a criterium, the four-day race was this year run as a UCI-ranked event for the first time. It attracted a modest field that included King's Wiggle team, as well as Orica-AIS and the Norwegian Hitec Products squad.

"To watch this race evolve as it has over the past few years is amazing," said organiser Kimberley Conte.

Just as the equivalent men's event has positioned itself as the season's curtain-raiser, Conte hopes the female event could become just as significant in years to come. "It's an absolute dream that we could hopefully host a [Women's] WorldTour [race] here some day. I think anything is possible."

Despite crashing on Monday's penultimate stage, 25-year-old King sat fourth overall — and on the same time as leader Katrin Garfoot (Orica-AIS) — and led the Queen of the Mountains classification at the time of print.

5

Number of times the Tour Down Under criterium has been won by an Australian

2011

Year the race last had an Australian winner – Matt Goss – prior to Caleb Ewan's victory

33°C

Temperature in Adelaide for the race

312w

Average power of Ag2r's Gediminas Bagdonas during the race

10

Number of different teams represented by the top 10 finishers



Racing gets underway
in Australia

Results

Winner: Caleb Ewan (AUS) Orica-GreenEdge, 51km in 1:02.25;
2. Giacomo Nizzolo (Ita) Trek; 3. Adam Blythe (GBR) Tinkoff; 4.
Ben Swift (GBR) Team Sky; 5. Marko Klump (SLO) Lampre-Merida;
6. Reinardt Janse van Rensburg (RSA) Dimension Data; 7. Davide
Martinelli (Ita) Etixx-Quick Step; 8. Matteo Pelucchi (Ita) IAM;
9. Wouter Wippert (NED) Cannondale; 10. Patrick Shaw (AUS)
Australia-AIS all same time

Killeen rounds off the season in style

Newly crowned national cross champ Liam Killeen (Specialized Racing) ended his season on a high, racing to victory in the final round of the National Trophy Series at Milton Keynes on Sunday.

The 33-year-old from Malvern christened his new national champion's jersey in style, finishing 46 seconds ahead of his nearest rival at the end of a challenging and muddy final round around the town's National Bowl.

Raleigh-GAC's Matthieu Boulo took second, while David Fletcher (Pines Cycles-Enve) completed the podium in third.

"Today was tough, the conditions made it really hard," said Killeen. "Boulo was putting me under pressure on the running sections, but I felt strong once I was back to pedalling."

Meanwhile, junior national champion Sophie Wright (Renvale RT) also gave her jersey a good first outing as she powered to victory in the elite women's race, crossing the line 26 seconds ahead of Ffion James (Abergavenny RC).

Elsewhere, Sam Allan (PedalOn) strengthened his challenge for the Wessex League title with victory at Southampton. It was his third win of the season, and saw him almost four minutes ahead of his nearest rival.

In the Notts and Derby League, Lee Shunburne (Fossa Racing) took his first victory of the season in the final round at Broxtowe



Killeen put in the ride of a true champion at the final round

Country Park, Nottingham, on Saturday. The 38-year-old has finished second in the league, with consistency proving key.

In road racing, Jo Skelton (Look Mum No Hands!) took victory in round five of the Imperial Winter Series, winning the E/1/2 race from Catford CC's Buauna Ball.

Wolverhampton Wheelers' Matthew Radford won the opening round of the Woolly Mamil Series at Stourport, with Luke Pollard (Nova Raiders) second, while 18-year-old Maisie Duckworth (PMR @ Toachim House) won the women's race.

And in round 10 of the Full Gas Winter Series, Ed Clemens (Spirit Bikes) was victorious at Lee Valley circuit, holding off James Lowden (Team ASL360) and Tony Gibb (Full Gas RT).

And at the Redbridge circuit Colin Ward (Essex Roads CC) won round two of the East London Velo Series, with last week's winner Anthony Anderson (Team Corley Cycles) second this time.

Cyclo-cross

Sunday, January 17

British Cycling National Trophy Series round 6 (Milton Keynes Bowl, Buckinghamshire):

Elite men: 1. Liam Killeen (Specialized Racing) 59.11; 2. M. Boulo (Raleigh-GAC) +0.46; 3. D. Fletcher (Pines Cycles-Felt) +1.26; 4. P. Oldham (Hope Factory Racing) +1.36; 5. N. Craig (Scott Racing) +2.06; 6. G. Drake (Leisure Lakes Bikes) +2.21; 7. N. Barnes (Hargroves Cycles) +2.34; 8. J. Clarkson (Hope Factory Racing) +3.10; 9. B. Sumner (Beeline Gener8) +3.57; 10. T. Van den Bosch (Hargroves Cycles) +4.19.

Elite women: 1. Sophie Wright (Renvale RT) 50.08; 2. F. James (Abergavenny RC) +0.25; 3. B. Crumpton (Boot out Breast Cancer) +2.03; 4. M. Pacios Pujado (Zappi's RT) +2.29; 5. E. Wadsworth (Beeline-Gener8) +2.30; 6. D. Beddis (Vicious Velo) +3.49; 7. A. Mellor (Oldfield-Paul Milnes) +4.24; 8. C. Broughton (Mid Shropshire Wh) +5.02; 9. M. Smith (Bolsover and Dist CC) +5.39; 10. S. Thackray (Oldfield-Paul Milnes) +6.17.

Under-23 men: Nick Barnes (Hargroves Cycles)

Under-23 women: Ffion James (Abergavenny RC)

Junior men: 1. Mark Donovan (Beacon Wh) 42.26; 2. W. Gascoyne (Pines Cycles-Felt) +0.04; 3. H. Yates (Hargroves Cycles) +0.29.

Junior women: Sophie Wright

Veterans 40-: 1. Robert Jebb (Hope Factory Racing) 46.40; 2. I. Taylor (C and N Cycles) +1.05; 3. Andrew Taylor (C and N Cycles) +1.15.

Veteran 50-: 1. Tim Gould (Zepnat RT) 49.07; 2. G. Johnson (Sunset Cycles) +0.13; 3. C. Young (Pedalsport CC) +0.26.

Veteran women: 1. Helen Pattinson (Solent Pirates) 46.22; 2. A. Kinloch (PH MAS VCUK) +1.00; 3. N. Davies (Beacon Wh) +2.02.

Under-16 boys: 1. Euan Cameron (Oldfield Paul Milnes Cycles) 33.44; 2. L. Askey (Lichfield City CC) +0.20; 3. C. Craig (Scott Racing) +0.26.

Under-16 girls: 1. Poppy Wildman (Nottingham Clarion) 29.45; 2. M. James (Abergavenny RC) +0.08; 3. K. Baptista (Nutcracker Racing) +1.03.

Under-14 boys: 1. Emile Alexander (Lichfield City CC) 36.51; 2. A. Gregory (Leicestershire RC) +0.35; 3. O. Stockwell (Welwyn Wh) +1.03.

Under-14 girls: 1. Maddie Wadsworth (Beeline Bicycles) 31.06; 2. Anna Wadsworth (Beeline Bicycles) +1.25; 3. A. Oxley-Szilagyi (PH MAS VCUK) +2.17.

Wessex League round 13 (Fairthorne Manor, Southampton):

Senior men: 1. Sam Allan (PedalOn) 54.08; 2. R. Smith (Team Moore Fitness) +4.02; 3. K. Norfolk (PedalOn) +4.58; 4. T. Budden (Sotonia CC) +5.49; 5. H. Wood (unattached) +5.53; 6. P. Warner (Ridebike.co.uk) +6.21; 7. J. Norfolk (PedalOn) +6.43; 8. C. Minter (PedalOn) +7.13; 9. S. Lloyd (FBGM) +7.14; 10. P. Wilks (Sotonia CC) +7.42.

Under-23: Chris Ewing (Fareham Wh)

Veterans 40-49: Graham Rogerson (Cotswold Veldriden)

Juniors: Edward Gronbeck (Oxford City RC)

Veterans Over-50: Dave McMullen (Cotswold V'den)

Women: Sarah Barber (North Hampshire RC)

Under-16 boys: Archie Scott (Cotswold Veldriden)

Under-16 girls: Katie Scott (Cotswold Veldriden)

Under-14 boys: Sam Bishop (Charlottesville CC)

Under-14 girls: Freya Richardson (Portsmouth North End CC)

Western League round 14 (Shipham):

Senior men: 1. Joe Griffiths (unattached) 55.30; 2. L. Holmes (unattached) +3.54; 3. E. Oliver-Evans (CX Megazone) +1 lap; 4. G. Leavy

(Urban Cyclery); 5. J. Linden (Royal Dean Forest CC); 6. D. Hall (BW Cycling); 7. D. Barnaville (Bristol CX); 8. B. Davies (Cheltenham Cycles); 9. A. Burridge (Bristol CX); 10. A. Hopkins (Cardiff Ajax).

Under-23s: Joe Griffiths

Veterans 40-49: Andrew Bam (unattached)

Veterans 50-59: Alan Green (unattached)

Veterans Over-60: Andy Simons (Cycle Tec)

Women: Marianne Britten (VC St Raphael)

Juniors: George Kimber (CS Dynamo)

Under-16 boys: Sam Smith (C'ham & County CC)

Under-14 boys: Henry Johnson (C'ham & County CC)

Saturday, January 16

SRAM Notts and Derby League round 12 (Broxtowe Country Park, Nottingham):

Senior men: 1. Lee Shunburne (Fossa Racing) 47.26; 2. J. Harper (Mansfield RC) +0.44; 3. A. Stuart (Nottingham Clarion CC) +1.21; 4. A. Naylor (Fossa Racing) +2.02; 5. A. Whiting (Bolsover and Dist CC) +2.36; 6. A. Duncan (Sherwood Pines CRT) +2.39; 7. N. Halliday (RAM CC); 8. A. Vaughan (Matlock CC); 9. C. Harrop (unattached); 10. K. Howarth (Nottingham Clarion).

Women: 1. Kate George (Empella) 48.20; 2. M. Heffron (Zepnat RT); 3. J. Roberts (Pines Cycles-Felt).

Veterans 40-49: 1. Daniel Alexander (Zepnat RT) 55.29; 2. M. Crouch (Fossa Racing) +3.17; 3. J. Marriott (Bolsover and Dist CC) +5.05.

Veterans Over-50: Chris Rowe (Zepnat RT)

Under-16 boys: Finn Mansfield (N'ham Clarion)

Under-16 girls: Alice Warbrick (Derby Mercury RC)

Under-14 boys: Christian Boon (Derby Mercury RC)

Under-14 girls: Alice Crane (Derby Mercury RC)

Road racing

Saturday, January 16

Full Gas Winter Series round 10 (Lee Valley, London):

Men, E, 1, 2, 3: 1. Ed Clemens (Spirit Bikes RT); 2. J. Lowden (Team ASL360) 3. A. Gibb (Full Gas RT); 4. T. Hargreaves (Nun-Sigma Sport); 5. J. Vaughan (VC Londres); 6. D. Cooper (VC Londres); 7. A. Blomeley (5th Floor CC); 8. G. Garnier (5th Floor CC); 9. I. Robins (Cycleworks.co.uk); 10. A. Wubben (unattached).

Women, E, 1, 2, 3: 1. Katherine Kimber (London Phoenix CC); 2. G. Atkinson (Rapha CC); 3. M. Atkinson (Lovelo Cinelli RT); 4. A. Henderson (Lovelo Cinelli RT); 5. C. Farley (Walden Velo); 6. S. McIntyre (Walden Velo).

Men, 4: 1. Lewis Winfield (VC Londres); 2. S. Berman (In Gear-Quickvit RT); 3. W. Conway (unattached); 4. C. Johnson (Islington CC); 5. D. Moll (Dulwich Paragon CC); 6. S. Shepherd (unattached).

Woolly Mamil Series race one (Stourport Sports Club, Worcestershire):

Cat 1, 2, 3, 4: 1. Matthew Radford (Wolverhampton Wh); 2. L. Pollard (Nova Raiders Cycling Club); 3. J. Swinnerton (Swinnerton Cycles); 4. B. Manfield-Yorke (The Nab Racing); 5. W. Corden (Mammoth Lifestyle); 6. S. Cavery (34 Nomads CC); 7. M. Burke (Welland Valley CC); 8. K. Bond (Ystwyth Cycling Club); 9. G. Richardson (NFTO Race Club); 10. C. Powell (Somerset RC)

Cat 4: 1. Will Swarbrick (Cheltenham & County CC); 2. F. Loveday (Leamington C&AC); 3. J. Wilson (Ludlow CC)

Women: 1. Maisie Duckworth (PMR Toachim House); 2. L. O'Brien (Team Giordana-Triton); 3. C. Coley (Ludlow CC)

Under-16 boys: 1. Matthew Lewis (W'hampton Wh)

Under-16 girls: 1. Annabel Lindsay (Redditch Road & Path CC)

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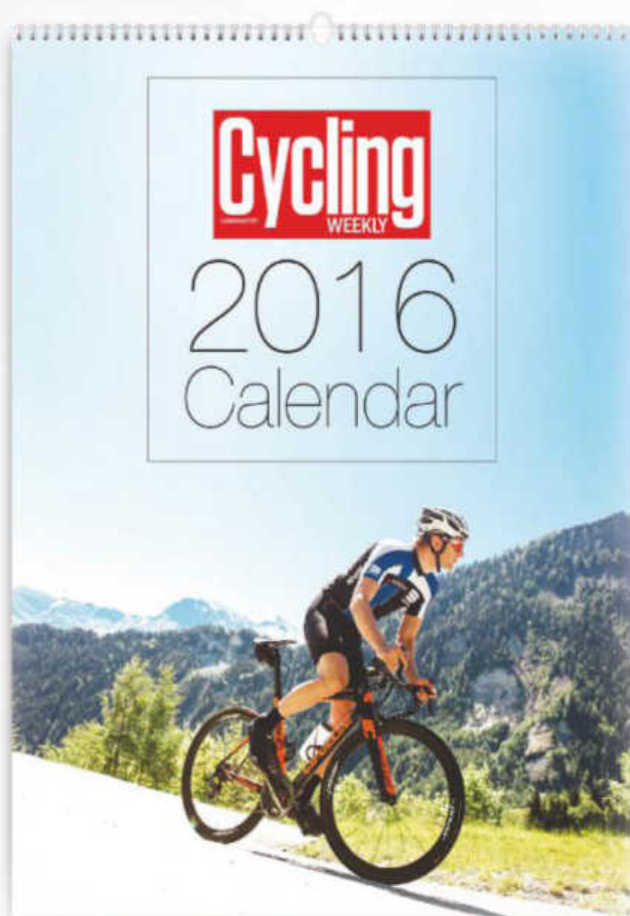
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Dr Hutch

Sky's decision to downgrade their team cars has delighted his pal Bernard, says the Doc

doctorhutch_cycling@timeinc.com



It was easy to miss the news about Chris Froome signing with Sky till 2018 last week. If, like me, you get your cycling news from random passers by on the internet, it was largely drowned out by the horrified reaction from Sky fans to the news that Jaguar was being replaced by Ford as the team's vehicle suppliers.

If I was a better armchair psychologist, I might try to divine some essential characteristic of at least some of Sky's fans from this deep concern about the thing the team carries its spare energy gels around in. As I understand it, the crux of the problem is that Fords are less expensive than Jaguars. Quite why that's a bad thing I'm a bit less clear about, but if I sold Pinarello bikes, it would certainly cheer me up.

Not everyone was aghast, though. When I raised the subject on a chilly winter ride with my



friend Bernard, he was rather pleased about it.

"It's brilliant," he said. "Give this a few years, and cycling will finally be back to normal."

Bernard being pleased about something is so unusual that I was a little taken aback. I had to ask him to explain.

Knock-on effect

"Cycling in Britain is not a Jaguar sport. It's a Ford sport, or maybe a Fiat sport, or even a Peugeot sport." I could tell he was pleased with that little Tom Simpson/Robert Millar reference, so I ignored it.

"British teams are not supposed to drive around in an F-type Jag with vanity plates," he said. "They're supposed to be proud that they've got a team car at all. That's

why all those old team publicity photos from the 1980s included a second-hand Ford Cortina. It was to prove they had one."

It was an odd-feeling ride. Bernard was happy about so much in the world of cycling that it was a bit disorientating. "Isn't it just great to see Wiggins and Cav focusing on the track for the Olympics?" was his next conversation starter. I made a noncommittal noise.

"Nah, it's great. They'll go to the Olympics, and it'll all go wrong," he said. "It's bound to. And you know what it's been like over the last few years; all that international success really puts pressure on people like us to keep our end up. Some rides I've had to concentrate so hard on riding with a flat back like Wiggins whenever anyone's

Dear Doc

Dear Doc,

I was riding to work when I stopped to check that a rider standing beside a giant pothole fixing a puncture was alright. He said he'd hit the hole and buckled his wheel.

His water bottle was sitting upright in the middle of the road, but when I went to pick it up, he said not to. He said he had put it there to act as a traffic cone so that no one else hit the pothole. I admit this seemed a bit far-fetched.

At that point a lorry drove past, and flattened the bottle. "That's funny," said the lad. "That's what happened last time I did that."

James F, email



“British teams are not supposed to drive F-types with vanity plates”

looking at me that I’ve been in agony for days after. When Rio is a disaster, we can all relax a bit and stick a few spacers below the stem. Maybe the British golfers will win some medals, and all the solicitors will have to start dressing like morons whenever they go to the driving range. I’d like that.”

His reason to be cheerful number three is the announcement that cycling is now only fourth on the list of sports with the most failed dope tests. He works on the

basis that in all aspects of sport, there are three medal positions, and after that no one cares.

Diminishing returns

“By September, we’ll be crap but we’ll be clean,” he said. “We’ll be like a Christian rock band. We’ll be so thoroughly in command of the moral high ground that it won’t matter that we’re not very good. All the arrivistes will give up cycling and take up rowing, or archery, or the triple jump.”

He sounded blissful at the thought. “And by this time next year, my friend, the only two people left in the country who will want to go for a bike ride will be you and me. And six months after that, it’ll just be me. It will be like the last 20 years never happened.”

GREAT INVENTIONS OF CYCLING

Road rage 1987

The term ‘road rage’ was coined in 1987 by a traffic news reporter at the Los Angeles TV station KTLA. It describes any aggressive behaviour by a road user, though it tends to be used mainly to describe anything that we might classify as somewhere on the ‘insane nutter’ spectrum. It’s not a recognised medical condition, though it has been associated by some with ‘intermittent explosive disorder’, which turns out to be a behavioural disorder, and not a gastro-intestinal one.

Extreme examples of road rage include a German truck driver who grew so frustrated with traffic congestion that he shot at over 700 other vehicles, which is as good an argument as you’re likely to hear for not arming skip-lorry drivers.

Road rage can, technically, be regarded by the criminal justice system as harassment, assault, manslaughter or murder. Most of the time, though, it tends to be classified as, “Why are you phoning us to tell us about it?” This is partly because ‘road rage’ alliterates, and crimes that alliterate are traditionally regarded as less serious than ones that don’t. (See also ‘white collar crime’, and for the purpose of this argument please ignore ‘mass murder’.)

Vehicle drivers and cyclists are both subject to road rage, although drivers tend to hold the whip hand since they have several tons of metal to hand for hitting other people with. Cyclists are quickly reduced to skating about in their carbon-fibre shoes and waving their tiny fists about.



Photo: davi85 - Fotolia



Hoy rides the UKSI bike to 2004 Olympic kilo gold

UK Sports Institute track bike

Simon Smythe sings the praises of a machine that strikes fear into the hearts of Team GB's rivals

The New Zealand rugby team perform the haka to intimidate their opponents before an international. The Great Britain cycling team have no need of an ancestral war dance before a track meet. A mere glimpse of the all-black UK Sports Institute bike with its Darth Vader-like presence has the same effect.

In the gladiatorial arena of the velodrome, believing your bike is faster than the opposition's — combined with the opposition believing it too — is the difference between gold and silver. And of course, in Team GB's case, it actually is faster.

Since 2002, Team GB's equipment has been the envy of the world, with the track frame the centrepiece in a collection of awe-inspiring custom components. The bike is now on MkII and is constantly being tweaked, but the blueprint remains the same.

The year after Jason Queally won gold in the kilo at the Sydney Olympics, the British Cycling Federation asked engineer Dimitris Katsanis to produce a new frame. Up to that point there had been no dedicated equipment programme. Indeed, Chris Fields, the creator of the Hotta Perimeter that Queally used in Sydney freely admitted it had been designed in his garage. Although this very British approach had famously borne fruit for Graeme Obree, now with lottery funding beginning to bolster its R&D budget and with Australian, American and German federations already having invested large sums in dedicated team bikes, it was time for Team GB to raise the bar.

Katsanis studied composites engineering in Britain and had an array of carbon-fibre creations for national sport teams to his name when British Cycling called. He'd also been a national

level track sprinter in his native Greece, so had an insight into the demands elite athletes made on their machines.

Record-breaking debut

The now-legendary matt-black frame he presented to Team GB wasn't a radical shape — Katsanis had said he didn't want to risk the UCI banning it — but it was fast. Chris Hoy immediately set new PBs on it and won gold at the 2002 Commonwealth Games kilo, where it was debuted.

Contrary to the conspiracy-minded mutterings from Team GB's rivals, and despite the red herrings thrown in their path by Chris Boardman's 'Secret Squirrel Club', there was no real secret to the UKSI bike. Its tube profiles were simply as efficient as possible within the UCI's parameters and it was made from better quality carbon-fibre than was commercially available at the time. Its performance was improved yet further by the specially developed bars, stems, chainsets and skinsuits that accompanied it.

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